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Situation of human rights in Afghanistan

Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly a brief interim report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan prepared by Kamal Hossain, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/18 of 18 April 2000 and Economic and Social Council decision 2000/251 of 28 July 2000.

* A/55/150.

** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1, this report is being submitted on 30 August 2000 so as to take into account the Economic and Social Council mandate and as much updated information as possible.

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Interim report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan

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I. Introduction

1. This is the fourth report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. He presented his first report (E/CN.4/1999/40) to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fifth session in March 1999, a second, interim report (A/54/422) to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session in November 1999 and a third report (E/CN.4/2000/33) to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-sixth session in March 2000.

2. The first report was made following visits to Kabul and to Islamabad and Peshawar, where Afghan refugee groups were interviewed in March 1999. The interim report to the General Assembly was preceded by a visit to Quetta and Kandahar in May 1999 and to Kabul and Islamabad in September 1999, following the receipt of allegations of serious human rights violations which were occurring as a result of resumption of conflict in the central highlands in Afghanistan, in particular in Bamyan in May, and in the Shamali Plains north of Kabul in July 1999. The Special Rapporteur's visits were aimed at gathering first-hand information. In May, he interviewed refugees, including women and children recently arrived from Hazarajat. In Kabul, he interviewed persons who had been forcibly displaced from the Shamali Plains in July 1999. The visit to Kabul was undertaken together with Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, who has dealt with the issues related to women's rights in some detail in a subsequent, separate report (E/CN.4/2000/68/Add.4).

3. Prior to finalizing the present report, the Special Rapporteur travelled to the Islamic Republic of Iran where he visited Tehran and Mashhad. He visited the voluntary repatriation centre set up by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at Chahar Sheshmeh and the screening centre in Mashhad. The Special Rapporteur was able to interview refugees of various ages and ethnic groups and, in particular women, mostly widows, who were heads of their families. He spent one half day in the Golshahr neighbourhood of Mashhad, where there is a large concentration of Afghan refugees. The Special Rapporteur visited the library partly supported by UNHCR, where he met a number of male and female students, as well as a skills development centre at which teenage girls were given training in the use of computers and other skills. An establishment which specially demonstrated the tragic consequences of prolonged armed conflict in Afghanistan was a kindergarten school run for war orphans, most of them from the central highlands of Hazarajat.

4. The Special Rapporteur met in Tehran high-ranking governmental officials, including Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian, Chief of Afghanistan Headquarters, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Hojatoleslam Ebrahimi, Adviser to the Minister of the Interior and Director-General of the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants (BAFIA); Mohsen Aminzadeh, Vice-Minister for West Asia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and M. Daneshyazdi, Director-General, Social and International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Mashhad, he met Ali-Akhbari, Adviser to the Governor-General of Khorassan province on Afghan Affairs; and M. Olama, Director-General, BAFIA, Khorassan.

5. The Special Rapporteur would like to record his appreciation for the assistance extended to him by the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Chief of Mission, UNHCR, and to the members of their staff. He would also like to express his gratitude to the Office of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) in Tehran and to the representatives in the Islamic Republic of Iran of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

6. The Special Rapporteur has always been mindful that, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/37 of 24 May 1984, his basic mandate is to examine the human rights situation in Afghanistan, with a view to formulating proposals which could contribute to ensuring full protection of the human rights of all residents of the country, before, during and after the withdrawal of all foreign forces. It has been his constant endeavour to obtain direct testimony with regard to human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. That testimony has been gathered both through visits to Kabul and Kandahar and from refugees in Peshawar,

Quetta, Islamabad, Tehran, Mashhad and other locations. The thrust of his previous two reports has been to provide an overall assessment and to identify the root causes of what is generally characterized as an appalling human rights situation and to make recommendations on how effective steps may be taken to improve it. The existing situation is described in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (A/54/918-S/2000/581) in the following terms:

> "The situation of the Afghan people remains deplorable. Four years after the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, visitors compare the city to a bombed-out city a few years after the end of the Second World War, except that no reconstruction is in sight and its people have little hope for improvement. There is a growing process of pauperization throughout Afghanistan, exacerbated by the most severe drought in 30 years. More than 20 years after the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the billions of dollars expended to feed successive war efforts, Afghanistan remains in a state of acute crisis — its resources depleted, its intelligentsia in exile, its people disfranchised, its traditional political structures shattered and its human development indices among the lowest in the world."

7. The severe drought which has affected much of Afghanistan is reported to be destroying the livelihood of over one million people. Some 80 per cent of the livestock of the Kuchi nomads is reportedly dead. The Argun water reservoir which supplied water to 500,000 farmers and the urban inhabitants of Kandahar for the past 15 years has run dry, as have reportedly 8 of the 10 rivers in the region. All of these events, according to an international assessment, have resulted in a humanitarian and environmental disaster in Afghanistan. The need for extended humanitarian assistance for the survival of those affected by drought cannot be overemphasised. The impact of the continuing conflict and the drought is described in section IV below.

8. In the current year, extensive policy reviews have been carried out in the United Nations, in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), in regional meetings and in various international meetings, including meetings of representatives of neighbouring countries. There is growing recognition that a clear identification of strategic goals is necessary. It is considered that there is a need for a resolute and concerted effort to implement effective measures to bring to an end the 20-year-long conflict which has caused massive destruction and inflicted enormous suffering on the people of this unfortunate country. There is also the need for the peace process to move forward and for a phased transition to take place for the establishment of a multi-ethnic, broad-based, truly representative government. Only such a government could set about rebuilding not only the physical infrastructure but also the institutions of governance within a constitutional and legal framework that conforms to the human rights standards contained in the international instruments, to which Afghanistan continues to be a party.

II. Developments aimed at promoting the peace process (April-July 2000)

Personal Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan

9. The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNSMA visited Kandahar and Kabul to hold discussions with Taliban leaders and also travelled to Dushanbe on 19 April to talk with the leaders of the United Front. The Personal Representative conveyed to all parties the deep concern of the Security Council, expressed in the Presidential statement of 7 April 2000 (S/PRST/2000/12), made on behalf of the Security Council, regarding reports that both parties to the conflict were preparing for renewed large-scale fighting, and the consequences that might ensue if the concerns of the Council were not heeded. While neither side had made any commitment, both declared that any military action by their respective sides would be purely defensive in nature.

10. Other issues discussed by the Personal Representative included ideas as to how a peace process under United Nations auspices might be structured; the establishment of a broadly based, multi-ethnic, fully representative government and the role in it of Mullah Mohammad Omar; the relations of the two sides with outside powers, including Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Central Asian republics, the Russian Federation and the United States of America; the demand by the Security Council in

paragraph 2 of its resolution 1267 (1999) of 15 October 1999 that the Taliban turn over Osama bin Laden; the broader issue of terrorism and, more concretely, the alleged existence of training camps for foreign militants in areas controlled by the Taliban; the continued interference of third countries in the affairs of Afghanistan and the presence of foreigners in the fighting; the production of and trade in narcotics; the impact of the escape of Ismail Khan from a Kandahar prison; relations among the various United Front leaders, including Ahmad Shah Massoud, Abdul Rashid Dostum and Abdul Malik, and the participation of the two warring parties in the Loya Jirgah, or traditional Afghan Grand Assembly, that may be convened.

11. The Personal Representative appealed to both parties, as had the Special Rapporteur in his letter dated 26 April 2000 (see annex), not to target civilian populations in the event of fighting, and discussed issues relating to the release of political prisoners and prisoners of war, allegations of serious human rights violations, reports of the dismissal of the female civil servants from government services and gender issues.

12. The Civil Affairs Unit of UNSMA, which has among its aims the improvement of the human rights situation by preventing further abuse through persuasion rather than denunciation, has been able to deploy civil affairs officers in Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad. Permission to open an office in Mazar-e-Sharif has so far been denied.

Organization of the Islamic Conference: Jeddah talks (March/May 2000)

13. Pursuant to a diplomatic initiative launched in February 2000 by President Sayyed Mohammad Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his capacity as Chairman of OIC, talks were held among the warring parties of Afghanistan, with the Permanent Representative attending as an observer. The talks conducted under the Chairmanship of Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Zarif resulted in an agreement to hold a second round of talks, which was held at Jeddah from 8 to 10 May. These talks led to an agreement for a comprehensive exchange of prisoners of war between the two sides, to be conducted through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). A special team, consisting of representatives from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, UNSMA and the Secretary-General, was set up to facilitate the implementation of the agreement. The two sides also agreed to respect their existing commitment not to target the civilian populations and to allow the unimpeded passage of humanitarian convoys to the civilian population on both sides of the front lines.

14. Around 21 June, the opposing forces in Afghanistan were to inspect each other's jails in preparation for exchange of prisoners. A six-member delegation headed by Mohammad Saleh arrived in Kabul on 21 June on behalf of United Front forces. The Taliban delegation, led by Moulvi Hamidullah, arrived in the Panjshir Valley. The United Front team was to visit jails in Kabul and Kandahar. Statistics on the number of prisoners vary. According to the United Front, the Taliban are reported to be holding 4,200 United Front loyalists, of which only between 600 and 700 are fighters captured in action. The number of Taliban prisoners in Taloqan was said to be about 700 but according to a senior Taliban official, the number would not exceed 400. Allegations were levelled that the Taliban, in order to avoid the exchange of prisoners from Mazar-e-Sharif, Samangan and Sar-e-Pol, had summarily executed, according to one report, 89 of them and, according to another, 189. The Taliban authorities denied these allegations. This is a matter which would need to be pursued further. A United Front spokesman has stated that the list of prisoners received from the Taliban contained the names of 100 non-Afghan prisoners.

15. Lists of prisoners were reported to be under preparation and the exchange of such lists was expected to take place. The importance of the exchange of prisoners lies in the fact that it would be a major step in a process that needs to be initiated in order to establish an enduring and stable peace in Afghanistan.

Loya Jirgah initiative

16. The Loya Jirgah initiative, described in the previous report of the Special Rapporteur, was launched in April 1999 by the former King Zaher Shah from Rome, and is known as the Rome process. Those involved in that initiative sent a delegation to United Nations Headquarters and to Washington, D.C., to explain their activities and to seek support. They sent similar delegations to countries members of the

European Union, Pakistan and Kandahar. They expect to send delegations to meet with the United Front, and to the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran. A representative of a similar initiative arising from a meeting in Cyprus also visited New York to explain its activities.

"Six plus two" Group and Group of 21

17. A technical meeting of the "six plus two" group on drugs emanating from Afghanistan was held in Vienna from 8 to 10 May 2000, and a meeting of their representatives was convened by the Personal Representative in Islamabad on 22 May. On 30 May, the Personal Representative convened in Islamabad a meeting of a larger group of representatives of Governments with influence in Afghanistan, known as the Group of 21. The members of the Group of 21, which had not met since June 1998, are China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uzbekistan, as well as OIC.

International cooperation for peace within the framework of the United Nations

18. Intensive consultations have been undertaken by the Personal Representative. Afghanistan has featured in discussions in major international and regional meetings and in meetings between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, between the Russian and Central Asian leaders, between China and the Central Asian States, between China and Pakistan, and between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. These discussions appear to have recognized the need for a negotiated peace which could rescue Afghanistan and its long-suffering people from the ravages of conflict, economic devastation and human rights violations.

19. The current expressions of international concern and emphasis on the special responsibility of the United Nations and the international community echo some of the core elements of the Geneva Accords of 1988, which provided the framework for the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989. On 8 April 1988, in a statement approved during the negotiations which yielded the Geneva Accords, the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs recounted that, throughout the negotiations, it had been consistently recognized that the objective of a comprehensive settlement implied the broadest support and immediate participation of all segments of the Afghan people and that this could best be ensured by a broad-based Afghan government. It was equally recognized that any questions relating to the government in Afghanistan were matters within the exclusive jurisdiction of Afghanistan and could only be decided by the Afghan people themselves. The hope was therefore expressed that all elements of the Afghan nation, living inside and outside Afghanistan, would respond to that historic opportunity. At that crucial stage, all concerned would, therefore, promote the endeavours of the Afghan people to work out arrangements for a broad-based government and would support and facilitate that process.

20. The heightened interest of the international community could be reflected in a significant enhancement of the role of the United Nations in carrying forward the peace process.

III. Resumption of conflict (June-August 2000)

21. Towards the middle of June 2000, even while the opposing warring groups were preparing to exchange teams to inspect each other's jails as a step towards implementation of the agreement for the exchange of prisoners, there were reports emanating from United Front sources of an externally supported Taliban offensive on the Shamali and Kunduz fronts. These followed the Taliban attacks on Salang some weeks earlier, which had been repulsed. On 26 June, at least two persons were killed when Taliban jet fighters bombed a United Front base in the Darra-e-Souf district of Samangan province and in the Kaldaro district of Balkh province in support of ground offensives.

22. Despite warnings and pleas by the Security Council, the Secretary-General, his Personal Representative and by the Special Rapporteur, as well as the Foreign Ministers of OIC and members of the

international community at large, fighting erupted in the Shamali Plains to the north of Kabul on Saturday, 1 July, around 3 a.m. local time. Although there were conflicting versions as to which side initiated the large-scale attack, it appeared that an offensive was launched by the Taliban against United Front forces in the areas of Baghram airbase and Charikar, 50 kilometres and 64 kilometres north of Kabul, respectively. The Taliban, however, sent a letter to the Secretary-General strongly denying its responsibility for initiating the offensive. It was claimed by the Taliban that their opponents had tried to portray events as if the Taliban had attacked them. Other Taliban officials had previously stated that the United Front had provoked the confrontation on 1 July by shelling the villages of Shekar Darra and Gol Darra, 25 kilometres to the north of Kabul, as well as Darra-e-Souf and Baghlan province, the previous day.

23. The Taliban forces made initial gains on the ground, but these were reversed by the United Front. In addition to military casualties, minefields laid in the Shamali Plains are reported to have taken a toll among the Taliban ranks. The United Front announced that a large number of Taliban soldiers, as many as several hundred, were killed or wounded — a claim rejected by the Taliban. Meanwhile, air raids carried out by Taliban jet fighters reportedly claimed civilian lives in Charikar and Jabal-us Saraj on 1 July and the following day.

24. Reports were received of the apparent presence of non-Afghan fighters among the Taliban. The United Front further claimed to have captured some of the foreigners during the fighting, which resumed on 1 July. The Taliban forces were reported to have gained ground on the so-called Old Road, which links Kabul with the provincial town of Charikar, held by the United Front. The Taliban were reported to have employed aerial attacks.

25. Despite intense fighting around mid-July, the front lines appeared to have remained unchanged but both sides continued to reinforce their troops to the north of Kabul. Following war preparations in the northern areas of Afghanistan, in Kunduz province, Takhar, Baghlan, Samangan and Sar-e-Pol, the Taliban were reported to have bombed northern Afghanistan on 23 July in a fresh round of fighting, killing three civilians and wounding seven others. Around 30 July, the Taliban forces captured Nahreen town in Baghlan province, after heavy artillery fire and aerial attacks.

26. Around 9 August, mortar and artillery duels raged in northern Afghanistan as forces of Taliban militia battled within five miles of a key United Front stronghold before being pushed back. After 15 hours of fierce fighting, the Taliban reached the outskirts of Taloqan. A United Front official in Taloqan said that most of the city's residents had fled the relentless fighting and accompanying bombing raids by Taliban jets. Thus, significant displacement of civilian population appears to have taken place.

IV. Impact of continuing conflict, drought and displacement on the humanitarian situation

27. The effects of one of the worst droughts continue to compound the suffering of Afghans. While the initial impact was largely on the economy, the drought began to take its toll on health and nutrition. The availability of potable water became a significant issue in urban and rural areas. Increased costs of limited food stocks in certain areas forced people to survive on famine foods. There were reports of famine-related deaths in the central highlands, where access to the affected populations remained constrained by insecurity.

28. Grave concerns were expressed by United Nations and non-governmental organizations relief partners about the adverse effects of an upsurge in fighting on an already vulnerable civilian population. The combination of war, drought and displacement continued to take a terrible toll on Afghans and their livelihoods. There was widespread fear of population displacement across the international borders.

29. The most seriously affected populations are livestock owners, especially the nomadic Kuchi population, and producers of rain-fed crops, including wheat. The mortality rate among livestock in the most affected parts of southern Afghanistan is estimated to be in the range of 50 per cent to 60 per cent. Crop loss in the majority of rain-fed areas is 90 per cent. The next chance for a normal crop from rain-fed areas will not be until 2001, since the vast majority of the cultivated land produces only one crop per year. According to the recent food and crop assessment carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the WFP, the food production deficit will be 2.3 million tonnes, more than double the figure for 1999.

30. Besides losing the thousands of head of precious livestock and hectares of wheat, Afghanistan's debilitating drought has taken a heavy toll on the fruit orchards. As the worst drought in 30 years continued to ravage crops in the south and west of the war-torn country, the cost of fruit soared, narrowing even further the nutritional options of the population. In general, wheat quality is exceptionally poor, disease levels are high and virtually none of the crop is of seed quality. In addition, the barley crop was totally lost. On 6 June 2000, the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan warned that, until June 2001, at least one half of the population of Afghanistan may be affected by drought. Three to four million people may be severely affected and another eight to twelve million moderately affected.

31. UNHCR was advising against the return of refugees to drought-affected areas of Afghanistan and suspended activities to facilitate and support voluntary repatriation to the most severely affected areas. Voluntary repatriation to drought-affected areas was not sustainable and could worsen conditions for the local population. Efforts were under way to ease the pressure on drought-affected refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran to opt for voluntary repatriation. This reinforced the need to focus on the provision of food as well as potable and irrigation water in areas of refugee return so as to prevent renewed departure.

32. Until early August, the response of the international community to the request for US$ 67 million for humanitarian assistance to alleviate the effects of the drought had been met only to the extent of 59 per cent of the amount requested. In the meantime, the response to the consolidated appeal for 2000, which had until then been funded only to around 43 per cent, continued to be inadequat The urgent need for humanitarian assistance needs to be strongly underscored. Without additional funding, even mine action operations (the critical need for which is emphasized in para. 44 below) will be reduced by 50 per cent as at 1 September 2000.

Refugees

33. One of the largest refugee movements in recent times had been generated by the over 20-year-long Afghan conflict. At present, it is estimated that there are some 1.4 million refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and a similar number in Pakistan, even after the voluntary repatriation from both countries of a significant number. About 100,000 refugees have opted for voluntary repatriation from Pakistan each year for the past three years, mainly to relatively peaceful areas in the eastern, central and southern regions. Pursuant to the agreement on a joint programme for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees reached between UNHCR and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, voluntary repatriation from that country has resumed in considerable numbers, compared to previous years. The joint programme comprises two distinct components. The first component is meant to facilitate repatriation of a voluntary nature to Afghanistan and is open to all Afghans, documented or undocumented, in the Islamic Republic of Iran. There are three voluntary repatriation centres, in Chahar Sheshmeh, Tehran and Zahedan, which Afghans wishing to return to Afghanistan approach. Those registered for voluntary repatriation after an interview to establish the voluntary nature of the return, biographical data and destination of return receive a grant of US$ 20, a plastic sheet, transportation to the border, 50 kilograms of wheat, another US$ 20 and transportation to provincial capitals of areas of return in Afghanistan. The second component is available to Afghans who are currently undocumented and who consider they have valid reasons not to return. They can submit claims to continued protection to joint screening teams, each comprising a representative of UNHCR and of BAFIA at six screening centres in the Islamic Republic of Iran, one of which is in Mashhad. The screening teams determine cases in which, in their view, there are genuine grounds for fear of persecution or threats to personal security and recommend the granting of refugee documents.

34. The Special Rapporteur visited Mashhad and held extensive discussions with the UNHCR representative and officials of BAFIA. He visited the voluntary repatriation centre at Chahar Sheshmeh and the screening centre in Mashhad. When speaking to those who were waiting to be interviewed at the screening centre, the Special Rapporteur was surrounded by throngs of interviewees making plaintive appeals that they should be allowed to remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Most of them were Tajiks or Hazaras, who are Shiites, although among them there were also Pashtuns and Farsi-speaking persons from Herat. They claimed that they had fled in the face of threats to their lives and did not wish to return to a place where they feared that they might be targets of persecution and

discrimination, and their lives and personal security could be at risk.

35. The Special Rapporteur also visited the Golshahr locality in Mashhad, which has one of the largest concentrations of Afghan refugees. There he visited a library in which both male and female students were interviewed, and also visited a centre at which girls were receiving computer training and training in other skills. The students and trainees made very strong appeals that they should not be asked or forced to be repatriated to Afghanistan unless conditions there changed so that they could expect to continue to receive education which, according to information they had, would be denied to them in Afghanistan, as would the prospect of employment.

36. In Tehran, the Special Rapporteur met senior Iranian officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of BAFIA. He noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran had borne a substantial burden in coping with such a large refugee population for a period extending over 20 years. The Special Rapporteur pointed out that the refugees whom he had interviewed were strongly desirous of not being repatriated until conditions changed in Afghanistan, when they could feel personally secure and when women and girls did not have to live under severe legal restrictions which effectively denied to them access to employment, education and health facilities. Acute resource shortages are faced by institutions and programmes which are serving the refugee population in the Islamic Republic of Iran. A heart-rending example of this was the threat of closure faced by the kindergarten school for war orphans in Mashhad, run by Afghan women teachers who had not received salaries for six months.

37. The Iranian officials pointed out that while they had borne an enormous refugee burden over a long period, they did not receive the same level of international appreciation or international support received by other refugee-receiving countries. The Special Rapporteur indicated that he would record the views expressed by the Iranian officials in his report and would emphasize the need for substantial enhancement of international support for the refugees who were living in the country. He also pointed out that, since the screen programme under the joint agreement was to end in early October, it would not be possible for the programme to cover all of the refugees whose cases were to be processed and that it would expose them to considerable hardship and danger if they were to face the risk of large-scale forcible repatriation after the mid-October deadline. Having regard to humanitarian considerations and the human rights of the refugees, he appealed to the Government that it consider extending the deadline for repatriation and in any event not deport refugees who had not expressed the desire to return voluntarily because of a fear of persecution or a threat to their personal security and, in the case of women, because they would be denied access to employment, education and health facilities. It was emphasized that only when there was a significant improvement in the human rights situation in Afghanistan could a significant increase in voluntary repatriation be expected. The Islamic Republic of Iran as the current chair of OIC, could contribute along with other members of OIC and the United Nations, towards bringing about the improvement of conditions in Afghanistan.

V. Human rights situation (June-August 2000)

A. Impact of armed conflict on human rights and violations of international humanitarian law

38. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the fighting. In addition to the damage caused by sporadic indiscriminate bombing, a large number of civilians were displaced when they were obliged to abandon their homes and meagre possessions.

39. Around mid-July, reports were received of systematic violations of human rights, including allegations of the summary execution of prisoners in Taliban-held areas in the north of Afghanistan. The Taliban authorities have denied these reports. These allegations call for verification and are a matter to be taken up further with all parties concerned.

40. The Special Rapporteur was able to interview General Ismail Khan and two others who had escaped from a maximum security prison in Kandahar. Before his arrest and detention, General Ismail Khan was the Governor of Herat and had been a commissioned officer in the Royal Afghan Army. He was one of the commanders of the Afghan resistance. He and the two other prisoners described their place of detention in Kandahar as the headquarters of Taliban intelligence known as Istikhbarat, where there were cells which had

no windows and where they were continuously kept confined except when they were allowed to go out to use toilet facilities. Each of them was kept fettered in chains during their entire period of detention, which extended for some three years. They had no opportunity to send or receive any letters or visits, except that General Ismail Khan was made available for a single interview by the previous Special Rapporteur, Choong-Ayun Paik. It is noteworthy that this was the only time he was taken from the detention centre to a place, said to be the guest house of Mullah Jalil, where he met Mr. Paik in a properly furnished room with two television sets. This was done apparently to give the impression that he was housed in comfortable surroundings. He had not been able to convey to Mr. Paik the harsh conditions of his detention. All three prisoners interviewed spoke of the torture to which those who were brought to that detention centre were subjected. The two interviewees, other than General Ismail Khan, gave harrowing accounts of torture which involved their legs being tied to an iron bar while they were in an upside down position and being beaten with cables. They were able to identify their torturers by name. General Ismail Khan himself did not report being subjected to torture but stated that since his cell was near the place where the intelligence officials conducted their interrogations, he had on many occasions heard the cries of persons who were being subjected to torture. One of the interviewees reported that he had learned that one of the prisoners who had been brought there, Suleiman Zirak, had been taken out and summarily executed.

41. Information was obtained from the interviewees regarding Dr. Ayub, the Superintendent of Shuhada Hospital in Jaghorey (Hazarajat) who has been detained without being charged for over a year and whose release has been repeatedly requested by the Special Rapporteur since May 1999. It was learned that Dr Ayub had spent several months in the Istikhbarat detention centre, before being removed in chains to Sarposa Jail in Kandahar. While in the detention centre he had been asked medically to attend to one of the interviewees when he had been ill.

Landmines

42. These are in general two categories of landmines: anti-personnel mines, which are designed to kill or maim people, and anti-tank mines which are designed to destroy vehicles but are capable of killing pedestrians and livestock. The key feature of the mines is that they are victim-activated, which accounts for the massive concern about their effects. In all too many conflicts, including that in Afghanistan, most victims have been civilian non-combatants. The indiscriminate effects of these weapons, which remain lethal for decades after a conflict, has led to an international campaign to have them banned. Most nations have now signed a treaty to that effect.

43. The effects of landmines are widespread and horrific. Even simple movement from one place to another becomes fraught with danger, as do activities such as farming, grazing livestock, and collecting water, wood, fodder and other plants. Mines, according to ICRC have the power to deny, by their very presence, the fundamental rights of refugees to return to their native lands. Landmines maim and kill but they also deny people access to farmland, water, pasture, roads and buildings, and kill valuable livestock that is often irreplaceable by the poor rural communities and nomads affected. By destroying or denying access to essential resources, and by adding to rehabilitation costs, landmines hinder economic development. They are an obstacle to post-conflict rehabilitation, to the delivery of aid programmes, to food security, sustainable livelihoods, and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes. Surveys indicate that some 223 square kilometres of the known mined area is farmland. This represents a loss in production of about 51,000 metric tonnes of cereal products per year, with a local value of over US$ 13.7 million. Conversely, the farming and grazing land cleared to date has been estimated to contribute around US$ 40 million annually. For these reasons, the presence of mines is often referred to as a silent war: the effects continue for as long as the mines remain in place. It is estimated that some 70,000 Afghans have been killed or injured by mines and unexploded ordnance in the past decade, causing untold human suffering, and placing a heavy burden on an already marginal health-care system. In 1999, ICRC-supported hospitals alone registered over 2,000 mine injuries, excluding those caused by unexploded ordnance, which is the lowest annual rate since 1979. It is estimated that up to 100 people continue to be maimed or killed every week, although the total number of deaths is difficult to estimate, since most go unreported unless the patient reaches a hospital. Given the types of mines and unexploded ordnance present, rough terrain, poor roads, lack of transport, vast distances and the lack of

medical facilities, it is considered that some 40 per cent of victims do not survive. There are estimated to be around 30,000 amputees in Afghanistan, with about 24,000 (80 per cent) of those resulting from mine injuries. Since amputees are thought to represent around 60 per cent of surviving mine victims, this would put the number of survivors at around 40,000, one of the highest figures in the world. The need for prosthetic limbs if victims are to recover mobility points to a further problem: that of coping with a lifelong disability. Afghanistan is not a society that is well-equipped to meet the needs of the disabled and, as a result, mine victims are likely to suffer unemployment, loss of self-esteem and clinical depression, for which once again resources are pitifully inadequate. Thus, landmines have significant social consequences, for victims and their families, and for the society as a whole.

44. After more than two decades of war, Afghanistan is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. In 1996, Kabul was possibly the most heavily mined city in the world, with an injury rate of over 40 per day. Today, as a result of concerted mine action, there are few mines left in Kabul, although, unexploded ordnance continues to be found. Indeed, there is a major problem with unexploded ordnance throughout Afghanistan: wherever fighting has taken place, bombs, mortars, artillery shells, rockets, grenades and other items litter the ground. It is thought that unexploded ordnance may cause even more deaths than mines, especially since poverty has forced many people to attempt to pry open these items to extract and either use or sell the explosive ingredients, or valuable aluminium, copper or brass. To date, 274 square kilometres of battle area has been cleared, however, unexploded ordnance continues to be found, most often by those who fall victim to it. Calculating the scale of Afghanistan's landmine problem is a complex task. According to a recent article:

> At least 38 different types of mine have been found in Afghanistan. On occasion, estimates of the number of mines to be found have been put forward: for example, in 1993, the United Nations suggested a total of 10 million mines and items of unexploded ordnance. However, the simple number of mines in a country is a poor measure of the problems they cause, since it tells one nothing about the pattern of their distribution, and the resultant human, social and economic effects. It is more useful to map and count minefields, since a minefield will disrupt normal life irrespective of how many mines it contains, and to count mine-affected communities. Initial data became available in 1993 as a result of the national survey of mines situation in Afghanistan, when 2,353 minefields were identified, occupying 388.75 square kilometres, or 0.06 per cent of Afghanistan's area.[1]

Surveys to date have identified over 3,000 minefields that directly affect 1,500 communities and pose a threat to others, including the more than one million nomads who roam the country. By mid-2000, with 211 square kilometres of mined area cleared, it was concluded that 718 square kilometres of land remained affected by mines, with 338 square kilometres demanding high-priority clearance. High-priority areas for clearance were notably to be found in the provinces of Herat (71.05 sq km), Kandahar (65.1 sq km), Farah (41.4 sq km), Paktia (28.91 sq km), Zabul (17.52 sq km), Kabul (18.38 sq km), Ghazni (17.4 sq km), Paktika (10.73 sq. km) and Nimruz (7.28 sq km). In Jowzjan, Bamyan and Uruzgan, reportedly no minefields of high priority remained. Clearance remains a substantial task but, fortunately, it is not being significantly complicated by new mine-laying, of which there is evidence only in front-line areas, such as Shamali Valley.

45. On 5 August 2000, gunmen shot and killed seven Afghans working in western Afghanistan for the United Nations-supported mine-action agency that is part of the United Nations mine action programme. The aid workers, all employees of the Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation, a mine-awareness non-governmental organization, were ambushed and killed on the road between Badghis and Herat provinces. The victims were Saran Wal Shah Poor, Mohammad Azay Malingyar, Abdul Mansoor, Ghulam Destageer, Azizullah Alikozai, Shah Mohammed and Abdul Rahman. Officials of the Taliban militia, which controls 90 per cent of Afghanistan, traded accusations with the opposition over who had carried out the killings. The opposition rejected the charge, saying that the area in which the attack occurred was controlled by the Taliban.

46. A study commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on vulnerability and humanitarian impact of Security Council sanctions in Afghanistan[2] recorded that the population of

Afghanistan was highly vulnerable and had little capacity to cope with any further economic shocks. The report further noted that, while there was almost no support within Afghanistan for further economic sanctions, an overwhelming majority of those interviewed indicated that an arms embargo would command widespread support and moral authority. As noted by many, United Nations restrictions on the transfer of weapons would avoid the humanitarian contradictions that were associated with economic measures. Moreover, there was a strong consensus among Afghans on the need for the United Nations to upgrade and intensify its political engagement and peacemaking efforts to end the war.

47. The Special Rapporteur has written to the Taliban authorities, requesting permission to visit various cities in order to assess the extent of displacement of civilian populations and damage caused by the resumed fighting and of violations of humanitarian law arising from aerial bombardment and shelling of civilian targets. He would endeavour to visit prisons and the Istikhbarat detention centre in Kandahar, if possible, in order to verify the description of that place and the conditions of detention of the prisoners there. He would also seek the comments of the Taliban authorities with regard to the allegations of ill-treatment and torture made by the interviewees. If those allegations prove to be well-founded, they would constitute violations of international humanitarian law and of human rights.

B. Impact of Taliban edicts and the existing legal regime on the human rights situation

48. On 18 July 2000, a Pakistani diplomat, Ibrar Hossain, speaking from the Consulate of Pakistan in Kandahar, stated to Reuters that visiting Pakistani soccer players, who had come to play football as members of the Young Afghan Football Club from Chaman in Pakistan, had been arrested for appearing on the football field in shorts. This had been considered to be a violation of the Islamic dress code enforced by the Taliban movement which forbids the wearing of shorts. The Taliban religious police arrested all but five of the players and shaved their heads. Five of the players managed to escape and seek refuge at the Consulate of Pakistan. The others were subsequently released and all returned home. The Taliban authorities apologized for the occurrence and reported that the person responsible had been removed from his post.

49. Early in July, an edict was issued banning Afghan women from working in non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies. Since women workers play an important part in relief and other work, this adversely affected the work of the non-governmental organizations and the United Nations agencies, including WFP, where over 600 women workers were being trained. This training programme was abruptly stopped.

50. The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General raised the issue of the dismissal of female government employees with the Taliban Foreign Minister, who explained that a lack of economic resources had forced the Taliban to eliminate a large number of positions in the civil service and that this had inevitably had a negative impact on women since they were receiving a salary without actually working. This situation had resulted from the fact that, after the Taliban had taken over Kabul, female employees had been able to continue to draw their salaries without being allowed to perform their jobs.

51. On 8 July, Mary MacMakin, an American aid worker aged 71 years, who had worked for over 20 years in Afghanistan running a physiotherapy and rehabilitation centre, was arrested together with seven Afghan female workers on allegations of spying and spreading anti-Taliban propaganda.

52. The United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan flew to Kabul and Kandahar and took up the issue with the Taliban authorities. In response to representations, Ms. MacMakin and the seven aid workers were released but Ms. MacMakin was directed to leave Afghanistan within 24 hours, which she did. The larger issue of female employment affected by the edict continues to be pursued by the United Nations Coordinator.

53. According to some reports, there has been some relaxation of the strict ban on female education imposed by previous edicts of the Taliban authorities. The strict ban on female education imposed by the Taliban authorities after their takeover of Kabul in 1996 appeared in some measure to be softening. Girls of up to high school age, it was reported, may attend informal schools that are private or funded by international organizations. Early in June, the supreme leader Mullah Omar issued an edict allowing access to

mosque schools to young boys and girls. In Kabul, considered by the Taliban to be in direst need of "moral reform", the authorities kept a close watch on the officially sanctioned primary and secondary education for girls in mosque schools, and obstructed informal home tutoring. Many female teachers who were sacked from their jobs in the state schools after the Taliban takeover have attempted to teach girls in their homes. In Kabul, they must register with the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which maintains a religious police force charged with enforcing the prescribed code of behaviour. In the countryside, far from the eyes of the religious police, families can set up home schooling for girls with the support of village elders and tribal leaders. International non-governmental organizations help to fund some of this informal education.

54. On 8 March, for the very first time in the recent history of Afghanistan, a formal public celebration of International Women's Day was held in Kabul. Seven hundred women of all ages, including former university professors, engineers, teachers, doctors, nurses and school principals attended the celebration. Ten of them were honoured with gifts from the organizers of the celebration — the United Nations system, working in collaboration with the Taliban authorities. The representative of Mullah Omar made a statement at the celebration. Radio Shariah, the official radio station, covered the event, and permission was given to a wide cross section of the international media to cover the event and conduct random interviews with the women present. At the end of the celebration, it was announced that six women prisoners would be released in celebration of the Day.

55. There is an indication that, during a seminar in Kabul of provincial representatives and other officials of the Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture, a proposal was discussed for consideration by the supreme leader of the Taliban to relax the ban on television, so that television may be used to promote Islam. This was the first such proposal made since the edicts of four years earlier, banning television, cinemas and music.

56. In mid-August, the Taliban ordered the United Nations to close down bakeries run by women in Kabul. The bakeries had been selling subsidized bread to 7,000 of the capital's poorest women. Early in July, the Taliban had issued an edict banning foreign agencies from employing any Afghan women outside the health sector. The United Nations had been hoping the bakeries would be exempt. When the Taliban took power in Kabul in 1996, they had banned all women from working. That left begging and charity as the only options left for women who had no male relatives to support them. There are tens of thousands of widows in Kabul alone, a result of two decades of war. The United Nations set up its widow's bakeries specifically to provide for such women. Earlier in the week members of the Taliban religious police had visited some of the bakeries, threatening individuals with beatings if they did not close. A direct order was issued from the Taliban Ministry of Planning that they must shut down but that order was subsequently revoked.

57. The statute on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, promulgated by the Taliban authorities around 15 August 2000, introduces substantial restrictions on the operations of the United Nations and the specialized agencies which provide humanitarian, economic, rehabilitation and development assistance in Afghanistan. Apart from the question of whether the control sought to be established by the statute would be consistent with the obligation of the United Nations and the agencies to conform to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in particular their obligation to ensure respect for human rights, these restrictions could impair the capacity of the United Nations and agencies to deliver assistance to communities and needy target groups. This measure could impede the access of the United Nations to all of the people of Afghanistan since such access would apparently require the intermediation of the Taliban authorities.

VI. Concluding observations

58. In his previous reports, the Special Rapporteur made specific recommendations with regard to human rights violations involving inhuman and degrading punishment, violations of international humanitarian law and, above all, the restrictions imposed on women's rights, which denied women access to employment, education and health facilities. He urged that the edicts, which were inconsistent with the obligations of Afghanistan under the international instruments to which it is party, should be repealed.

59. The relaxation of some of the restrictions referred to above and the apology that followed the incident in which Pakistani football players had their heads

shaved, indicate the kinds of infringements of human rights that result from the edicts and dress codes enforced by the religious police. This force is composed of young militants who mete out punishment in a rough and ready manner without due process. The Taliban authorities need to understand that their obligations under international human rights instruments cannot be met, and violations cannot be justified, by invoking grounds based on subjective versions of religious or cultural prescriptions, many of which cannot be supported by authoritative religious texts, traditional Afghan practices or the practice of other Muslim countries.

60. The allegations regarding violations of international humanitarian law and the reports of alleged torture and summary execution need to be addressed by the Taliban authorities. The Special Rapporteur would seek the comments of the Taliban authorities on these allegations in the course of his proposed visit to Afghanistan. If such reports prove to be correct, those responsible for summary execution and torture would incur international criminal liability, and the international community must consider appropriate measures to be taken in this regard. The allegations of summary execution and torture warrant further inquiry.

61. A substantial increase in humanitarian assistance is urgently required to meet the survival needs of persons who have been seriously affected by the drought. Increasing international assistance is also needed to meet the needs of the refugees, since large-scale repatriation is not feasible for the reasons detailed above.

62. The United Nations and the international community are at present actively focusing on the basic issues to which the Special Rapporteur drew attention in his previous reports, namely, the need for a framework change, through resolute efforts to end the armed conflict, and to move forward with the peace process. This process must be inclusive and involve all segments of the Afghan population, inside and outside the country. The objective would be to rebuild Afghanistan and to restore the country to all of its people. This would only be possible through a negotiated peace and a process of transition aimed at the establishment of a broad-based, multi-ethnic and truly representative government.

63. Such a broad-based government could expect to create conditions of confidence, enabling several million refugees to return to their homeland. Only such a government could be expected to repeal the edicts which result in systematic violations of human rights and to create the conditions under which basic human rights could be guaranteed to the women, men and children of Afghanistan, rights that they are entitled to by virtue of the fact that Afghanistan is party to the main international human rights instruments (including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment).

64. More than 10 years after the Geneva Accords, the United Nations and the international community should not be content with half-measures and inadequate steps which will prolong the agony of the Afghan people who continue to be victims of a prolonged conflict that is supported and promoted by external forces. They have too long been denied the protection from external interference assured them by the Geneva Accords and repeatedly urged by the Security Council, and protection of their human rights as guaranteed by international instruments.

Notes

[1] William Maley, "Mine action in Afghanistan", in *Refuge*, vol. 17, No. 4 (Toronto, Canada, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, October 1998).

[2] Under preparation. For a summary, see <www.reliefweb.int>, "By country".

Annex

Letter dated 26 April 2000 from the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan addressed to the President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan

I am extremely concerned that, despite repeated calls for a ceasefire by the Security Council and the General Assembly, reports are being received that preparations are under way for a military offensive by both sides involved in the armed conflict in Afghanistan. Armed conflicts inevitably lead to grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and inflict enormous suffering on civilians, in particular women and children. Such violations also give rise to international criminal responsibility on the part of those responsible for such violations and add to further instability in the area.

You will recall that in the correspondence I addressed to both sides in 1999, I had appealed for restraint and urged them to avoid violations of human rights and humanitarian law and in the infliction of suffering on civilians, in particular women and children.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has been gravely concerned that civilians are still being deliberately targeted in different front-line areas in Afghanistan. He has deplored the indiscriminate bombing in the Panjshir Valley on 14 February 2000, which resulted in the death of eight civilians and has had terrible repercussions for civilians and internally displaced persons in the area.

The President of the Security Council in his statement of 7 April 2000 expressed deep concern at the reports that both parties to the conflict in Afghanistan are preparing for renewed large-scale fighting, and recalled the Council's repeated demands that the Afghan parties cease fighting.

The Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution adopted on 18 April 2000 on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, strongly condemned the mass killings and systematic human rights violations against civilians and persons deprived of their liberty for reasons related to the armed conflict. The Commission urged all the Afghan parties to cease hostilities immediately and to reaffirm publicly their commitment to international human rights and principles and to recognize, protect and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I appeal to both sides in Afghanistan to be aware of the above concerns and to refrain from resumption of armed conflict and in any event to avoid the types of violations that have characterized past offensives. I once again appeal to you and others in positions of authority and responsibility to take all necessary measures to safeguard the life and well-being of civilians and to pursue a resolution of the conflict by peaceful means.

(*Signed*) Kamal **Hossain**
Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights
on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan

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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan

Report of the Secretary-General**

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* A/55/150 and Corr. 1 and 2.

** The late submission of the report is due to the recently changed situation in Tajikistan; the impact of new peace-building activities and humanitarian needs are included in the report.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 54/96 A of 8 December 1999, by which the Assembly called on the Secretary-General to continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Tajikistan and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The report covers the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000.

II. Current situation in Tajikistan and future role of the United Nations political presence in the country

2. The main provisions of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan (A/52/219-S/1997/510, annex I) have been implemented, and the transition period ended with the first multi-party parliamentary election and the first session of the professional parliament, which was held in the country earlier this year. Three main factors have contributed to the success of the peace process: early United Nations involvement in the resolution of the Tajik conflict; the continuous strong support of guarantor States of the General Agreement, who are members of the United Nations-led contact group; and the political will of the two Tajik parties and their leadership to resolve differences through dialogue.

3. The United Nations was instrumental in assisting the negotiation and implementation processes conducted under its aegis. The United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) should be regarded as a successful peacekeeping operation. The Security Council acknowledged the significant achievement of the Tajik parties, which had managed to overcome many obstacles and put their country on the path of peace, national reconciliation and democracy. The Council joined the Secretary-General in hoping that those achievements would be consolidated in the further strengthening of the institutions in the country with a view to the democratic, economic and social development of Tajik society. The Council supported the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish a United Nations Tajikistan office for peace-building following the termination of UNMOT on 15 May 2000.

4. Tajikistan has now entered a new phase of post-conflict peace-building. However, that process is affected by both internal and external problems. Issues that are still unresolved include post-conflict internal security questions, including organized crime and mass drug trafficking, the need to promote and protect human rights, unresolved refugee problems and instability in neighbouring Afghanistan. The extreme poverty faced by 80 per cent of the population, recent poor harvests, severe drought, and the collapse of the social safety net, public health, sanitation and educational systems render the achievements of the peace process extremely vulnerable. Those problems cannot be resolved by internal means alone and require continued international economic assistance. In the case of Tajikistan, such assistance has always been insufficient.

5. Tajikistan needs to receive more than exclusively humanitarian aid. Sustained economic growth that would also ensure the successful rehabilitation of the former irregular fighters and their supporters is the key to maintaining peace and stability in Tajikistan. The programme of economic and social recovery and structural changes, including further democratization and market reforms, requires urgent and significant international development assistance. Without such assistance, the achievements of the peace process in Tajikistan might easily be endangered.

6. Accordingly, with the agreement of the Government of Tajikistan, the United Nations Tajikistan Office for Peace-building was established in June 2000 for an initial period of one year to pursue the objectives of post-conflict peace-building and consolidation of the peace. The Office has been entrusted with a mandate to provide the political framework and leadership for post-conflict peace-building activities of the United Nations system in the country, including support for the efforts of the United Nations resident coordinator and the inclusion of the Bretton Woods institutions in promoting an integrated approach to the development and implementation of post-conflict peace-building programmes.

7. The Office will help to mobilize, in close cooperation with the United Nations country team, international support for the implementation of programmes aimed at strengthening the rule of law, the promotion and protection of human rights, demobilization, voluntary arms collection and employment creation for former irregular fighters. The

Office will help to create an enabling environment for the consolidation of the peace, and will liaise with the Government, political parties and other representatives of civil society to broaden national consensus and reconciliation.

III. Current economic situation

8. The disintegration of the former USSR and the civil war seriously affected the economic viability of the newly independent Tajikistan. The delivery of basic social services has deteriorated and living standards continue to decline. As a result, Tajikistan's economy requires urgent support. The abrupt withdrawal of subsidies provided during the Soviet era (40 per cent of budgetary expenditures), unfavourable agricultural incentives and weak administrative capacity have also contributed to the steep economic decline of the country, pushing over 80 per cent of the population below the poverty line. High rates of unemployment, in particular among youth, the non-functional national safety net system, a lack of opportunities for private investment, declining domestic production, competition for scarce resources, and other financial, cultural and criminal factors have contributed to political instability. The situation is worsening increasingly in rural areas, and a large caseload of rural and urban vulnerable groups continue to rely on international relief assistance. Wage labour, remittances, assistance provided by international organizations, trade and drug trafficking constitute the major sources of income. However, the Government's efforts to introduce structural changes, in particular the privatization process, have resulted in 3.7 per cent growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in 1999. The nation's major economic resources include vast water reserves, which are scarce in Central Asia, cotton, processing of imported aluminium ore, and some deposits of gold and semi-precious stones.

IV. Humanitarian operations

A. General

9. The implementation of the General Agreement, which provided for the implementation of constitutional changes to allow for the holding of new presidential and parliamentary elections and the demobilization and reintegration of combatants, has provided a foundation for the national reconciliation of Tajikistan society. However, the humanitarian situation has not improved due to severe economic deterioration and reduced earning power for the great majority of the Tajik population. Currently, a large segment of the population relies on food assistance provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) and other international humanitarian organizations, such as the Aga Khan Foundation, German Agro Action, Care International, Mercy Corps International, Save the Children, Mission Ost and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Food production has declined over the past few years. In 1999, cereal production amounted to 475,000 tons, a drop of 17 per cent compared to 1998. This was in the main due to unfavourable weather conditions, deteriorating irrigation facilities, crop blight (brown rust and smut) and a lack of resources to procure necessary agricultural inputs.

10. Basic social services, such as health, water and sanitation, and education, have deteriorated due to a lack of essential supplies and proper maintenance. The salaries of social services employees are not enough to cover their basic daily requirements and are often paid after delays lasting months. The standard of education continues to decline. Many children do not regularly attend schools due to a lack of clothing, footwear, little or no heating in the schools during the winter, and shortages of textbooks and other basic school supplies. Only 35 per cent of the population, mainly in urban areas, have access to piped water, and 54 per cent of the urban population lack adequate sanitation facilities. Water distribution systems are non-existent in most rural areas and are extremely inefficient where they exist. In 1999, an estimated 2,500 children died from waterborne disease. High infant mortality rates (21.7 per 1,000 live births) and maternal mortality rates (64.5 per 100,000 live births) and a decline in life expectancy from 70.5 years in 1991 to 68.3 years in 1995-1999 are evidence that Tajikistan's health situation has fallen behind that of other Central Asian States. Most health-care institutions are dependent on essential drugs provided by international organizations. There is a shortage of medicines and medical professionals in remote villages. Of particular concern is the lack of resources to purchase vaccines and to control epidemics, such as typhoid and malaria epidemics, and outbreaks of tuberculosis, dysentery, brucellosis, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted diseases. According to official estimates, over 7,000 cases of typhoid and

more than 13,000 cases of malaria were registered in 1999.

11. A substantial lack of funding is severely affecting United Nations operations in Tajikistan. Donor response to the 2000 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal stands at approximately 32 per cent, some of which comes from a recommitment of 1999 pledges, which has had a serious impact on emergency and rehabilitation programming, impacting especially on efforts to resettle and rehabilitate refugees and internally displaced persons.

12. Perhaps most worrying of all is the impact of the worst drought in over 70 years, which is currently affecting much of Central Asia. According to a preliminary assessment conducted by WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), cereal production could drop as much as 40 per cent below the 1999 level, which was already 17 per cent below the 1998 level. The President of Tajikistan has appealed to the United Nations and several major donor countries for humanitarian assistance to address the consequences of the drought. The impact on already poor people and communities is devastating, with over three million people in need of emergency support. Failure to provide support is likely to result in increased mortality among vulnerable groups and undermine recent progress in national reconciliation and rehabilitation of the economy.

13. Demobilization of armed groups and creating job opportunities for demobilized fighters remain major challenges for both the Government of Tajikistan and the United Nations system. Since the Government of Tajikistan does not have adequate resources to employ demobilized fighters in civilian activities, it is extremely important that alternative means of livelihood are created in order to engage the demobilized fighters and consolidate the achievements of the peace process. The continued support of the international community to create job opportunities in order to further strengthen peace and stability in the country remains crucial.

14. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, led by the resident representative/ humanitarian coordinator, has coordinated humanitarian activities in Tajikistan. As part of that function, the Office organized the preparation of the 2000 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Tajikistan (launched in November 1999) and conducted a mid-term review of the Appeal in June 2000. It also led the development of a national contingency plan for emergency preparedness and response. Sectoral issues are addressed through regular coordination meetings arranged by designated agencies. Currently, the United Nations system is developing a common strategy to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development assistance. The broad objective of the strategy will be to link the operational strategies of the individual United Nations agencies and to address the short-, medium- and longer-term needs and priorities of the country. Regrettably, no funding has been committed in 2000 for coordination activities to further the long-term strategic response exercise.

B. Security developments affecting humanitarian relief efforts

15. During the second half of 1999 and early 2000, brutal killings by criminal groups, armed clashes between criminal groups and government forces, kidnappings for ransom, hijacking of vehicles and forced entry into homes have remained a feature of the security landscape, posing a threat to United Nations personnel in Tajikistan. However, after the Government took special measures in March 2000 to control criminal activities in Dushanbe, the level of criminality in the capital declined notably.

16. A security assessment in the Karategin Valley in fall 1999 reported an improved security situation in the area. As a result, security restrictions for Gharm, Jirgital and Tajikabad districts were eased, allowing United Nations assistance to reach needy populations. Parts of the Karategin Valley, such as Tavildara, Darband and Faizabad, continue to be off-limits to United Nations international personnel, however. Nevertheless, some humanitarian and rehabilitation projects are being implemented by local personnel employed by United Nations agencies in those areas. In January 2000, a security assessment was carried out in Kofarnikhon District, East of Dushanbe, followed by a joint inter-agency security and humanitarian assessment. The mission recommended that Kofarnikhon also be made accessible, with the condition that international staff of United Nations agencies manage operational activities from Dushanbe. To date, the main road between Dushanbe and the Karategin Valley continues to be out of bounds for United Nations personnel.

C. Activities of non-governmental organizations

17. Some 40 international and over 100 national non-governmental organizations, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), provide humanitarian assistance in Tajikistan. NGOs carry out humanitarian activities in all sectors, the bulk of assistance concentrating on food and health programmes. The NGO community accounts for most of the emergency drugs distributed to health institutions throughout the country. Sectoral coordination is carried out through the sectoral coordination committees organized and chaired by the relevant agencies within the United Nations system. There is also an NGO coordination body which works closely with the United Nations system.

18. The NGO community continues to face certain obstacles from various government authorities, especially in the form of demands for tax payments. Recently, customs authorities sealed the warehouses of three NGOs providing humanitarian food aid to different parts of the country for their alleged failure to pay duties on humanitarian goods normally exempt from taxes.

19. The general decline in funding for humanitarian activities by the donor community in Tajikistan has also affected some of the international NGOs operating in the country. Priority activities, especially in the fields of agriculture, water and sanitation, and education, have had to be cut back as a result.

D. Relief food assistance

20. Over 60 per cent of the Tajik population derives its livelihood from agriculture. Of a total area of 243,000 square kilometres (km), only 7 per cent of land is arable (93 per cent of the country is mountainous). Tajikistan is classified as a low-income food-deficit country. Domestic cereal production meets only about one half of national needs, the rest being covered by commercial imports and food aid. Over 80 per cent of citizens live below the poverty line and 25 per cent need food assistance to survive. Retail food prices are high relative to typical incomes. The main coping strategy for many families, even in urban areas, is to grow food on small-scale private plots. The United Nations maintains that rehabilitation and development of the agricultural sector to achieve food security are priorities for international assistance.

21. The 2000 cereal harvest in Tajikistan is likely to be affected by two major factors. First, the agricultural sector faces persistent problems of obsolete machinery, deteriorating irrigation systems, lack of quality seeds, shortages and high prices of fertilizer, pesticides and other inputs, unavailability of credit for agricultural production, and complications of ownership related to the transition from state-run collective farming to private farming. Second, the 2000 cereal crop is being affected by the lowest rainfall levels in 74 years, coupled with above-average ground temperatures. The resulting drought is a major cause for the failure of crops on non-irrigated land. The production of staple cereals is therefore expected to decline for the third consecutive year and the country will face the largest inter-annual drop in cereal production in recent years. Given pre-existing widespread poverty shortages and rising prices, the drought will affect larger sectors of the poorest population. In the second half of 2000, emphasis will need to be placed on drought response, initially in the form of food aid and related non-food items, and later in the form of seeds and tools to ensure a better crop in subsequent years.

22. Since July 1999, WFP Tajikistan has been implementing a protracted relief and recovery operation, which has been extended until December 2000. Under the operation, WFP plans to reach 370,000 beneficiaries, with a commitment of 50,082 tons of food commodities. However, as of June 2000, only 50 per cent of the total requirement had been pledged, with the result that WFP food stocks have been insufficient to cover programme needs. Although some additional resources are expected to arrive during the summer, they will be sufficient only to cover ongoing programme needs for two to three months and provide some immediate small-scale relief to the drought-affected population under the operation's relief window. That is an inadequate response to the pressing need presented by the drought. More commitments are needed in the next six months to prevent loss of life.

23. WFP implements joint projects with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whereby UNHCR provides funds for the procurement of non-food items and WFP provides the food component. Projects include a variety of activities, such as land-lease schemes, income generation and land rehabilitation activities. WFP

chairs a fortnightly food aid coordination meeting in order to exchange information on projects implemented by agencies involved in food assistance, review the food situation in different parts of the country and consider other programme and policy-related issues, such as approach to food-for-work projects, rations and criteria for targeting vulnerability. WFP continues to prepare regular overviews on the food supply situation in the country, monitoring the activities of food agencies by geographic location, the yearly food aid plan and other related data.

E. Agriculture support

24. Humanitarian agencies continue to provide assistance for agricultural development in various ways. In collaboration with UNHCR and WFP, FAO has provided seeds, fertilizer and tools to over 5,000 returnee and poor rural families in the Khatlon area (South-west Tajikistan) to improve household food security. FAO provides substantial assistance to the animal health and public health sectors, through support to field veterinarians. FAO's potato seed multiplication programme continued for the third year, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. Having undertaken a review of the seed sector, FAO has prepared a comprehensive project document to support the sector and drafted a new seed law for Tajikistan. In March 2000, FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture also organized a workshop on the theme "Strategy for agricultural development in Tajikistan".

25. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programme has supported agricultural development efforts in the Karategin Valley by distributing high-quality seeds to farming constituencies and rehabilitating basic agricultural infrastructures. A number of international NGOs have also been supporting the agriculture sector through the distribution of high-quality seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other essential agricultural inputs, as well as undertaking small-scale repair and rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure. Due to limited donor response, however, international assistance to agriculture has not reached the critical mass necessary to accomplish a major turnaround in the performance of the sector.

F. Refugee repatriation and support

26. At the height of the conflict, approximately 700,000 people were displaced by fighting into the South of the country or into neighbouring countries. Although most of those have returned home following the success of the peace agreement, some continue to be displaced, living with host families. In addition, the repatriation and reintegration of refugees from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is not complete. UNHCR, having accomplished a major programme of return of 48,000 refugees during 1993-1998, continued to assist voluntary repatriation from Commonwealth of Independent States countries. In 1999, 4,670 refugees were repatriated with UNHCR assistance. UNHCR has endeavoured to match the return of refugees with a reintegration programme, emphasizing the rehabilitation of social amenities, opportunities for income generation, access to land, and support to beneficiaries in the form of seeds, fertilizer and microcredit schemes. In addition to this assistance, UNHCR monitors the returnees, in cooperation in some areas with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to ensure that their basic rights are respected and to guarantee their successful reintegration into society.

27. UNHCR implements its programmes in cooperation with FAO, WFP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNDP/the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), among other organizations. It is engaged in the promotion of the capacity-building of national institutions, while at the same time strengthening its protection activities by organizing training on legal issues, judicial practices, and the promotion of human rights and the rights of the asylum seekers, in collaboration with OSCE and other national and international organizations.

28. During the first half of 1999, procedural complications imposed by transit countries delayed the repatriation of some refugees from Turkmenistan. Despite all such difficulties, 4,670 refugees were returned, against the planned figure of 5,000. The improvement of the security situation has allowed UNHCR to accelerate the resettlement of returnees from Kyrgyzstan in the Karategin Valley, which was delayed in the first half of 1999. As in previous periods, UNHCR was assisted with repatriation by other agencies, including the International

Organization for Migration, IFRC and the State Migration Service of Tajikistan.

29. As part of its reintegration activities, UNHCR has been providing short-term shelter and food assistance, along with longer-term support to the returnees through income generation projects. Since 1993, UNHCR has completed repairs to 25,000 houses, including 128 during the reporting period. UNHCR continued to implement the land-lease programme with WFP, which benefited 2,000 returnee households. Working with other agencies, UNHCR also assisted the rehabilitation of health, water and education facilities. In communities where refugees have been resettled for longer periods, UNHCR shifted its focus in early 1999 to microenterprise activities in order to increase food security and family income.

30. In the current year, UNHCR plans to facilitate the return of another 5,000 refugees from Central Asian countries and to support reintegration activities by linking those returns to the development process. The return of refugees is now expected to be completed by mid-2001. However, the refugee reintegration process continues to be onerous due to the lack of resources, bureaucratic encumbrances and the slow process of cultural reorientation. Donor support for resettlement and rehabilitation projects, aimed at resettling both internally displaced persons and refugees and regenerating livelihoods, has generally been inadequate. In particular, an additional 10,000 houses to accommodate future returnees must be reconstructed. Food aid is currently provided to over 225,000 vulnerable people, including internally displaced persons, across the country. However, urgent support is needed for longer-term projects in food security, infrastructure rehabilitation, health, water and sanitation, and education. Poverty among internally displaced persons demands a better response than that which is currently possible.

G. Health and nutrition

31. The health sector in Tajikistan continues to be heavily dependent on support provided by international humanitarian organizations. The health status of the Tajik population can be broadly defined by an analysis of mortality, morbidity and environmental indicators. Maternal mortality rates dropped from 94.6 to 64.5 per 100,000 live births and infant mortality from 42.4 to 21.7 per 1,000 live births in 1999. Life expectancy at birth has declined from 70.5 years in 1991 to 68.3 years in 1995-2000. However, concerns have been voiced about the accuracy of registered data after the introduction of an administrative fee for the registration of births and deaths, which many families cannot afford. Drug abuse is another serious health problem that continues to grow, especially among young adults and the unemployed.

32. The number of unsupervised home births has increased to nearly 30 per cent of all births and in certain rural areas to more than 90 per cent. Birth intervals are, on average, less than two years for most women and more than 40 per cent of all pregnant women suffer from anaemia. The number of low birth-weight babies has increased to more than 17 per cent of all live births. The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases has also increased, with syphilis levels increasing from 1.6 per 100,000 in 1991 to 16.3 per 100,000 in 1999. It is estimated that between 40 and 50 per cent of the adult female population may be suffering from some form of sexually transmitted diseases. Communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis, malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, were the most prevalent during the reporting period. Malaria incidence remains high. However, the number of official registered cases of malaria dropped 60 per cent due to the support provided by European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and NGOs.

33. Immunization rates were previously high, although coverage was more limited in areas suffering from persistent insecurity. Coverage for anti-tuberculosis vaccine was 98 per cent for children up to one year. Coverage for the diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine was 94 per cent. Owing to difficulties in maintaining the cold chain, coverage rates dropped during 1999. Although tuberculosis and measles coverage continued at 98 per cent, both DPT and polio dropped to 79 per cent. UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Health by providing vaccines and training. The cold chain facilities need to be replaced since the electricity supply in rural areas is extremely poor and unstable, thus affecting the quality of vaccines and putting the lives of thousands of children at risk.

34. Malnutrition continues to persist, especially among returnee children. Malnutrition rates for children under five years appear to have stabilized at

rather high levels. Between 30 and 50 per cent of children are chronically undernourished (stunting), while 7 to 15 per cent are acutely malnourished (wasting). UNICEF has been providing iron folate weekly supplements and supports the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Food Production in efforts towards wheat flour fortification with iron. In 1999, two maternity hospitals were certified as baby-friendly hospitals in Dushanbe and Khujand, where UNICEF and WHO are assisting in the promotion of breast-feeding and in training for health workers. UNICEF provides potassium iodate and laboratory equipment for monitoring two of the county's three salt factories (for salt iodination).

35. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been implementing a new country programme for Tajikistan since January 2000, aimed at supporting national efforts to improve the quality of life through better reproductive health care and support to sustainable development and gender equity. Other activities include improving the distribution system and availability of contraceptives, training of health workers and nurses to advise women on reproductive health, and in-service training of reproductive health personnel.

36. The interventions undertaken by international organizations have improved access to medical care in Tajikistan. In particular, most of the hospitals and outpatient clinics in areas affected by civil conflict have been rehabilitated and re-equipped, with the assistance of UNDP/Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Programme (RRDP), UNHCR, the World Bank, WHO and a number of non-governmental agencies.

37. Funding for the health sector remains inadequate. Average per capita expenditure has plummeted from US$ 250 in 1990 to approximately US$ 2.50 in 1998. The loss of more than 17 per cent of the country's doctors and 21 per cent of its nurses during the last six years has caused major staff shortages and compromised professional standards. International agencies have continued to support the Government of Tajikistan through the provision of fellowships and training for health professionals. The Government has actively embraced the need for reform and the Ministry of Health is now collaborating with WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank to strengthen the health-care system, particularly in the area of primary health care. The number of hospital beds has fallen with a shift in focus to primary services.

38. WHO has continued to facilitate the coordination of health sector activities. WHO and the Ministry of Health organized a partnership meeting with donors for mobilizing resources in support of the roll back Malaria programme. Currently, humanitarian assistance provided by some international organizations is utilized in activities with a long-term developmental impact. The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are providing credits to the Government for further sustainable development of the health-care system.

H. Water and sanitation

39. The standard of water and sanitation services is a major concern in Tajikistan. Access to safe drinking water in periurban and rural areas is still below 30 per cent. There are entire communities, especially in the Khatlon region, which have no access to tap water. In rural areas, water is carried, mostly by women and children, from rivers or natural springs that are often polluted and located at a distance from home villages. Often the community's drinking water comes from open channels that flow through the streets and into which all wastewater is directed. The lack of clean drinking water and proper sanitation has contributed to the increase in typhoid epidemics in the country.

40. While significant investment is needed to repair deteriorating infrastructure, some rehabilitation activities in the sector have been undertaken by UNDP/RRDP and a number of international NGOs. UNICEF has also continued its water and sanitation programme in the Khatlon Oblast and expanded it to the Leninabad Oblast. The production and installation of slow sand filters and hand-washing basins, and the repair and installation of latrines at selected schools and health institutions has continued, and UNICEF's health/hygiene education project is being expanded. UNICEF has cooperated closely with a number of NGOs and governmental partners on water and sanitation planning and implementation. It should be noted that despite the involvement of many international organizations in water and sanitation activities, that sector has thus far received the lowest funding.

I. Education

41. The downward trend in school enrolment (from 100 per cent before the eruption of civil conflict in 1992 to 67.8 per cent in 1999) persisted during the reporting period. Most of the educational infrastructure, including school buildings, furniture and learning materials, has been destroyed due to the civil conflict and neglect. Children in most schools, especially girls and those in remote and rural areas, lack proper clothing or basic education supplies. Major impediments to improvement in the education sector have been inadequate funding and limited capacity to restore the collapsed infrastructure. It is vitally important to reverse the persistent decline in school enrolment and literacy rate in a country that had 100 per cent enrolment and 98 per cent literacy a decade ago.

42. UNICEF has provided school learning materials, including textbooks for grades 1 to 4, for the most disadvantaged schools in several parts of the country. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are supporting the Ministry of Education through a pilot project in order to renovate 20 schools and provide them with furniture and textbooks in selected regions. Other agencies, such as UNDP/RRDP, WFP, UNHCR and a number of NGOs, have contributed to the rehabilitation and restoration of schools in different parts of the country.

J. Child protection

43. UNICEF recently signed a new country programme of cooperation with the Government of Tajikistan for the five-year period 2000-2004. The country programme includes child protection measures. A hotline for teenagers programme established by the NGO Women Scientists of Tajikistan provides 24-hour service, receiving over 200 telephone calls per month. Magne Roundalin has conducted seminars on child protection to help children suffering emotional trauma, which is reflected in the UNICEF child enrichment and young peoples' well-being programmes.

K. Rehabilitation and development

44. UNDP is playing a lead role in transition activities bridging humanitarian assistance and development. With the completion of a Tajikistan living standards survey and follow-up poverty assessment, both co-funded with the World Bank, UNDP, in collaboration with FAO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and UNFPA, ensured that key ministries have access to the data collected, with the provision of computers, training and the database itself.

45. UNDP/RRDP, executed by UNOPS, has successfully completed hundreds of sub-projects, including water and sewage systems, schools, clinics, hospitals, roads, embankments and bridges. The process of identifying and prioritizing community needs and the tendering and selection of contractors has been managed by the district development advisory committees created by the project. The committees, supported by professional advisers, will now have new responsibilities as monitors and advisers to the community to ensure the project's ultimate sustainability.

46. Another priority activity is the reintegration of former combatants, particularly in the Karategin Valley. UNDP/RRDP sub-projects have been well received by communities and officials. Moreover, the security situation, while precarious, has remained calm enough for activities to continue in those areas open to United Nations personnel. However, insecurity in Gharm has resulted in the withdrawal of international and non-Gharmi national staff from the UNOPS office in the area. UNDP/RRDP initiatives play an important role in promoting the stability in the country, and continued emphasis could be placed on conflict-prevention activities in future programming. A cross-border initiative between UNDP Tajikistan and UNDP Kyrgyzstan in the Ferghana Valley is an excellent example. A Swiss-funded project, it targets the core of social conflict and ethnic tension caused by the division of resources within communities by international borders. Through the implementation of the sub-projects, which are mainly related to water resource rehabilitation and management, Tajik and Kyrgyz elements within communities are being drawn together to find a common solution, as well as accept common responsibility for the success of the project.

47. UNDP's women in development project is continuing its contribution to mitigating the impact of the marginalization of women in Tajikistan. The women in development bureau supports the empowerment of women through its microcredit schemes and university scholarships programme for

disadvantaged young women, as well as through advocacy and institutional-building activities. It also provided significant support to the creation of a national platform in preparation for the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women; the first publication in the country dedicated to gender statistics; and the mainstreaming of gender into policy and legislative reform.

48. The Informatics Training Centre in the UNDP/UNESCO project with the Technological University of Tajikistan has conducted training for institutions, students, government officials and private citizens in computer usage and informatics. An agreement is being negotiated with the Government to provide free Internet access for five years, thereby enabling the Informatics Training Centre to establish a firm financial foundation and offer a variety of services.

49. Following the parliamentary elections, UNDP, with OSCE, began a civic education project aimed at raising awareness among target groups within the general population (i.e., women and youth), as well as locally elected representatives. Within parliament itself, UNDP is providing technical and material support to the creation of a professional parliament, linking its activities with the UNDP programme on accountability and transparency and Management Development and Governance Division. These initiatives, which address critical issues, such as accountability and transparency, have been well received by the Government.

L. Drug control and abuse

50. Drug trafficking has become a lucrative business in Tajikistan, owing to its proximity with Afghanistan and relative volatility. The Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention of the United Nations Secretariat estimates that a significant and increasing proportion of Afghan opium, morphine and heroin is being smuggled through Central Asia, mainly through the 1,700 km border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The narcotics are then forwarded to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation. Although some drugs are absorbed locally along the routes, the final destination of the bulk of the narcotics is Europe and, to some extent, the United States.

51. The Office is currently providing assistance to Tajik authorities in order to strengthen drug control in the country. Its effort aims to stem drug trafficking from Afghanistan into Tajikistan through the implementation of three different projects: the establishment of a specialized drug control agency, the strengthening of border control by Tajik border forces and the provision of assistance to the Russian Federal Border Service, which is deployed along sections of the Tajik border with Afghanistan.

52. The Tajik Drug Control Agency was established on 1 June 1999 by the President of Tajikistan as a follow-up to the signing of a protocol between the President and the Executive Director of the Office in April 1999. The Office is fully funding the establishment of the Agency, which is entrusted with coordinating drug control and prevention policies in the country and conducting drug control operational activities. The Agency has already carried out anti-drug operations and activities for the prevention of drug abuse.

53. The Office, with the Tajik Agency, has also promoted activities related to raising awareness of the risks posed by drug abuse, including organizing public events against drugs, such as sports events, music shows and a drawing competition among school children of Dushanbe on the theme "Children against drugs in Tajikistan". The Office is planning to further strengthen its commitments in the near future in the area of demand reduction and treatment and the rehabilitation of drug abusers. Finally, through the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Centre, the Office is carrying out a global study on the illegal drug market.

V. International assistance

54. Of the US$ 30.3 million requested in the 1999 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Tajikistan, donors have contributed US$ 20.0 million. The response for the 2000 Appeal, however, has been even more disappointing. Despite significant improvements in the operating environment over the last 12 months, the delivery of adequate humanitarian assistance has been limited by a shortage of funding. The sum of US$ 34.8 million has been requested for Tajikistan for 2000, which is intended to provide life-saving care for vulnerable people as well as crucial rehabilitation projects to revitalize communities and restore basic

infrastructure. Less than US$ 2.6 million has been pledged to date, with an additional US$ 8.7 million recommitted from 1999 pledges for food aid. The consequences of that shortfall are dramatic. At a time when a severe drought threatens three million people, the food aid and security component of the Appeal is underfunded by approximately 50 per cent. Despite international recognition of the importance of rehabilitation and economic stability in preventing future conflict and recovery from past conflict, no funds have been provided towards a request for US$ 4.5 million. More worrying is the complete absence of funding for emergency preparedness. Tajikistan's location, in an area known for natural disasters, demands sensible and proactive preparation for future emergencies. Without support for preparedness, the ability of the humanitarian community to deal with future disasters is likely to be diminished and much slower than it would be otherwise. Additional information on funding, including contributions by specific donors, can be accessed at:

www.reliefweb.int.

55. The World Bank has allocated a US$ 93.4 million loan in the form of technical cooperation for a period of three years and US$ 100,000 in the form of grants. IMF has allocated US$ 9 million in balance of payments support. ADB has granted US$ 20 million for rehabilitation activities, of which US$ 10 million will be implemented by UNDP/RRDP.

56. The European Commission, through ECHO, has pledged 12 million euros for emergency food, health, water and sanitation, and emergency preparedness for a 12-month period, beginning in May 2000.

57. UNDP and the country team work with multilateral institutions as part of the wider development framework for Tajikistan. Cooperation takes place under the auspices of the consultative group for Tajikistan, the public investment programme, and the living standards survey, which forms the basis of work against poverty.

VI. Concluding observations

58. Despite the conclusion of the peace process and significant progress in the security environment, limited progress has been achieved in the social and economic sectors. Access to food and basic social services, such as health, water and sanitation, and education, has been further limited by deteriorating economic conditions and the prevailing drought. Therefore, humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance remains crucial not only to sustain life but also to promote development and prevent renewed conflict. Although agencies carrying out humanitarian operations have already begun to deliver relief assistance in a way that promotes self-reliance and contributes towards economic recovery, needs are so great that the halt of relief assistance could result in disaster, an especially tragic prospect given the hardship already being caused by the drought in the region.

59. The 2000 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Tajikistan includes projects and programmes of various United Nations organizations that would facilitate a smooth transition from pure relief to rehabilitation and sustainable development. Most of the projects, while targeting the short-term needs of the destitute population, include longer-term objectives that would contribute to post-conflict rehabilitation and recovery. The humanitarian programmes will continue to link relief to development, while meeting the basic needs of vulnerable populations. The United Nations team in Tajikistan is re-evaluating its activities in order to prepare a common strategy that would support relief and recovery activities during this transitional period, with a major focus on promoting self-reliance and sustainable development efforts.

60. A real opportunity has been presented to the international community to consolidate peace in Tajikistan. Although a good basis for peace currently exists, the lack of resources necessary to rebuild the country could deal a serious blow to Tajikistan's efforts to reintegrate former combatants, restructure basic services and rebuild its economy. As Tajikistan's economy gradually recovers, more resources are needed for the emergency programmes that sustain hundreds of thousands of people, especially in the current drought. Tajikistan faces a critical moment in its development and requires the sustained support of the international community to survive the current crisis and to build a solid future for its people.

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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General**

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 20 of General Assembly resolution 54/189 B of 17 December 1999, by which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-fifth session a report on actions taken pursuant to that resolution. The report covers developments during the period from 1 July 1999 until 30 June 2000.

II. Review of major humanitarian developments

2. The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan continued to deteriorate during the period under review. The combination of ongoing military conflict, seemingly intractable political difficulties and the harsh natural environment continued to take its toll on the lives and livelihoods of the majority of Afghans.

3. As predicted in the previous report on this question (A/54/297), fighting escalated in the summer of 1999, further compounding the vulnerability of millions of Afghan civilians. A major air and ground offensive launched by the Taliban against the United Front during August caused the displacement of over 100,000 people into the Panjshir Valley and Kabul. In some cases, the displacement was forced. In the Shomali Plains north of Kabul, widespread burning of houses and crops by the Taliban followed the displacement.

4. During the reporting period, combatants denied humanitarian agencies effective access to many areas, including parts of northern Kabul, Parwan and Kapisa provinces and districts in central Afghanistan. This compounded the difficulties in reaching affected populations, caused by inhospitable terrain and poor infrastructure. Earlier problems of access also had continuing effects during the period under review, for example, the recent winter/spring outbreak of measles in various parts of the country, which killed about 800 children, could be attributed to lack of immunization

* A/55/150 and Corr.1 and 2.

** The late submission of the report is owing to the recently changed situation in Afghanistan. The impact of recent conflict and new humanitarian needs is described in the report.

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owing to the inaccessibility of these areas in 1998 and 1999.

5. Nevertheless, the build-up of the United Nations international presence inside Afghanistan during 1999 and into 2000 greatly contributed to the ability of the United Nations to respond to humanitarian needs, in particular those of displaced persons. The United Nations now maintains a permanent international staff presence in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Faizabad and Jalalabad, and a transient presence at Hazarajat.

6. Increased international presence on the ground also put the United Nations in a better position to press the authorities for access to populations in need. In December 1999, the United Nations succeeded in negotiating cross-line access to displaced populations in the Panjshir Valley. This allowed for urgently needed food and shelter materials to reach 60,000 displaced people, helping them to survive the harsh winter months. A similar operation was conducted for internally displaced persons in Darra Souf in the Central Highlands. Despite these positive developments, the authorities continue to limit access to certain areas at great cost to civilians who are in desperate need of assistance.

7. The impact of the Taliban offensive during the summer of 1999 continues to be felt by large numbers of displaced people gathered in Kabul, the Panjshir Valley, and in various locations in the north and east of the country. Sporadic fighting has continued in the central and northern regions and is further complicating assistance efforts, as well as compounding the plight of many civilians.

8. An additional development of serious humanitarian concern is the drought affecting Afghanistan and the wider region, the worst since 1971. The whole country is affected, and long-term intervention will be required to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable populations.

9. The drought has diminished both crop and livestock production. The crop assessment by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates cereal production in 2000 at 1.82 million metric tonnes, representing a reduction of 44 per cent relative to 1999 and 53 per cent relative to 1998. Reduced fodder availability, water shortages and distress sales have decreased animal holdings by between 50 per cent and 100 per cent across the country.

10. The drought presents a major dilemma for those considering voluntary repatriation from neighbouring countries. While repatriation slowed towards the end of 1999, it picked up in the first quarter of 2000 following agreement between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on a joint programme for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from that country. Humanitarian assistance to address the effects of the drought is as critical for those inside Afghanistan as it is for those returning.

III. Socio-economic developments

11. The severely war-disrupted economy shows a high incidence of poverty and unemployment. There are few formal-sector employment possibilities. The only functioning social safety net is charity in rural areas and international assistance in urban areas (particularly the WFP-subsidized bakeries). There are still no major rehabilitation or development projects or any major private sector investment.

12. Transit trade with neighbouring countries remains a key sector of the "legitimate" economy. Cross-border trade through the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan has expanded as Afghanistan adjusted to the suspension of flights and border restrictions with Pakistan. Trade in narcotics and, presumably, arms constitutes the mainstay of the "criminalized" economy.

13. The Taliban reorganization of the public sector has worsened urban poverty. Numbers of staff at several central ministries have been reduced, the Ministry of Higher Education by 6,000 employees and the Ministry of Education by 12,000. Female teachers who were no longer allowed to work but were still on the payroll have now lost their incomes as well. At the same time, public sector pay has been reorganized, with the announcement of a US$ 0.30 daily food allowance for all civil servants. While the redundancies have been implemented, the announced pay increases have not materialized and the precarious state of public finances has meant that politically weak ministries are in arrears in salary payments.

14. After relative stability in exchange rates in 1999, the Afghani depreciated more rapidly in 2000. The

economy remains open and prices rapidly adjust to exchange rate movements. Public sector workers with salaries fixed in Afghanis and rural workers with employment contracts that include a fixed cash element are, however, highly vulnerable to this instability.

15. The regional drought has emerged as the dominating factor affecting the socio-economic situation in the medium term. It comes at a time when much of the population is already highly vulnerable. Some, in particular in the Central Highlands, have had to sell their assets or go into debt to cope with reduced crop production in 1999. Moreover, in the centre and north of the country, people have faced conflict and displacement. The possibility of renewed fighting and the effects that war-induced displacement may have on drought-affected populations are cause for concern.

16. Lack of savings or assets and the high level of dependence on agriculture and livestock raising mean that many families have nothing to fall back on. There is no meaningful presence of government line ministries beyond a few provincial capitals. Government structures either do not exist or have no capacity to assist people, who find themselves with no prospect of a crop for the next 12 months. The migration of people from drought-affected areas to urban areas means that there are fewer and fewer job opportunities.

17. A mitigating factor against the drought is that neighbouring Pakistan, which has a better-developed irrigation network, has recorded a wheat surplus estimated at 2 million tonnes in 2000. Pakistan has provisionally designated 600,000 tonnes for export to Afghanistan.

18. The United Nations imposed limited economic sanctions on Afghanistan with effect from November 1999. Since then, there have been no commercial flights to Afghanistan. However, flights of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and non-governmental organizations in support of the international assistance operation have continued, and Ariana Airlines was able to undertake flights to Saudi Arabia for the annual Hajj. So far, the majority of Afghans seems to have adapted to the limited sanctions with minimal economic effects. The psychological effects of sanctions linked, in the minds of many, to the deteriorating socio-economic situation have, however, profound ramifications, including the development of hostile attitudes towards the United Nations.

IV. Assistance provided by the United Nations and its partners

19. The ongoing political and military instability inside Afghanistan and the absence of practically all institutions of governance reinforce the requirement for structured and robust coordination. The Secretary-General's reform initiative and the strategic framework for Afghanistan, prescribing close integration of assistance, human rights and peacemaking activities, have contributed to a high level of coordination.

20. The concept of principled common programming provides the mechanism for translating the principles of the strategic framework into concrete assistance activities on the ground. During the past year, the establishment of United Nations regional coordinating offices and inter-agency regional coordinating bodies has served to strengthen the coherence of assistance programmes delivered inside Afghanistan. As these structures become more firmly established, collective planning and programming are expected to continue to improve. This in turn will enhance accountability.

A. Food aid and food security

21. Confronting its worst drought since 1971, Afghanistan is expected to have a cereal deficit during the period 2000/2001 as high as 2.3 million tonnes, more than double that of the previous year. Access to food is, therefore, a chronic problem that will be dramatically exacerbated over the coming year for a large proportion of the population of approximately 22 million. WFP plans to provide 117,166 tons of wheat to 1,603,000 victims of drought throughout the country for 12 months from 1 July 2000.

22. Key indicators of the gravity of the situation are increases in the price of wheat and changes in the relative purchasing power of Afghans. The price increase for a kilogram of wheat flour in Afghanis, between the first week of September 1999 and the last week of May 2000, varied from 40 per cent in Kabul to 119 per cent in Mazar. In areas of Hazarajat, where a food blockade persists, wheat is unavailable or costs four times the price in Kabul. Many families are

subsisting on famine foods and deaths by starvation have occurred.

23. The quantity of wheat flour that a daily wage labourer is able to purchase in one day is used as a basic indicator of purchasing power. Purchasing power in most major urban centres in Afghanistan early in 2000 had declined in comparison to the previous year, by between 4 per cent in Jalalabad and 40 per cent in Mazar.

24. Under its regular programme from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2001, WFP expects to provide 201,850 metric tonnes of food to 2.6 million vulnerable Afghans through the activities described below. It is intended that 52 per cent of recipients will be women or girls.

25. WFP supports bakery projects in Jalalabad, Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif. In Kabul, 132 general bakeries and 25 women's bakeries provide heavily subsidized bread for up to 270,000 vulnerable people daily. In Mazar-i-Sharif, 80 bakeries, 20 run by women, serve approximately 92,000 people daily. The Jalalabad project operated 60 bakeries between March and May, during the pre-harvest lean season, serving 112,000 people daily.

26. Emergency food distributions have been carried out in various regions. In southern Afghanistan, emergency food distribution in three provinces since January 2000 has reached an estimated 170,000 people. A similar distribution was carried out between December 1999 and March 2000 in three districts of Ghor province in western Afghanistan for an estimated 7,000 families. These interventions followed an emergency food needs assessment by WFP and had to be made primarily because of the poor wheat harvest during 1999 and 2000. Emergency food distributions also included support for displaced families. In December 1999 and in April 2000, as part of a United Nations-led operation, WFP provided wheat to 7,000 displaced families in the Panjshir Valley. In addition, in December, as part of a winter relief effort coordinated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, WFP assisted 2,000 families in Darra Souf in Samangan province. Emergency food assistance has also been provided for up to 16,000 internally displaced persons residing in the ex-Soviet compound at Kabul.

27. Food-for-work activities are currently being used to improve agricultural infrastructure and rural feeder roads. These activities increase food production and improve access to markets and health facilities. One of the largest food-for-work projects of WFP is the Kabul winter relief project, which began in March 2000 and will provide almost 2,000 metric tonnes of wheat for up to 4,000 men and 1,300 women.

28. Other activities currently being supported by WFP include food-for-seed, under which 879 metric tonnes of wheat have been distributed to 1,700 farmers, and institutional feeding, under which 1,659 metric tonnes of food have so far been distributed to 46,737 vulnerable beneficiaries.

B. Health

29. United Nations agencies are collaborating with non-governmental organizations and the public health authorities to relieve the deficit in health services in Afghanistan. Priorities include human resource development for health, expansion of the integrated disease control programme, and activities to improve maternal and child health. While health facilities remain inadequate and even non-existent in many remote areas, there has been modest improvement in the access of women to health care. Afghanistan continues, however, to have some of the worst health indicators in the world.

30. During 1999, over 100 training courses for both female and male health workers were conducted inside Afghanistan by experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), an international non-governmental organization and national health authorities. Workshops to revise the curricula for intermediate medical courses for nurse midwives, laboratory technicians, doctors' assistants and dental assistants are also being facilitated. The rehabilitation of a female nursing school at Kandahar allowed it to be restarted in May 2000 with the help of WFP and WHO. Similar support has been provided to the nursing school in Herat, where 50 per cent of the students are women. Male nursing schools are also being supported with equipment and materials.

31. WHO and UNICEF, in collaboration with national authorities and other partners, implemented four rounds of national immunization days for polio eradication for children under the age of five years. The success of this programme has demonstrated that

well-coordinated efforts can reach large groups of people despite the ongoing constraints in war-torn Afghanistan. The success of the national immunization days in May and June 2000 can be attributed to the respect of both sides for a ceasefire that had been negotiated under the leadership of UNICEF.

32. To reduce the spread of malaria and leishmaniasis, WHO and its partners have provided drugs, insecticide-treated nets, laboratory supplies and training courses in all regions and have developed a health education leaflet on malaria for schoolchildren in the local languages.

33. To support tuberculosis control, WHO has provided drugs, diagnostic facilities and shortcourse chemotherapy to 5,000 patients, has trained health staff in the WHO tuberculosis control policy and directly observed treatment shortcourse strategy, and has translated into Dari and printed training modules for managing tuberculosis at the district level. A national tuberculosis manual has also been developed.

34. The capacity to control and prevent the spread of epidemics in Afghanistan remains critical. In addition to the measles outbreak in winter and spring, acute haemorrhagic fever was reported from Gulran district in Herat in May and June 2000. WHO sent a four-member medical team to Herat to investigate.

35. UNICEF, WHO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and concerned non-governmental organizations are promoting safe motherhood initiatives and mother and child health services, in cooperation with national authorities. The focus of UNFPA assistance remains largely on women, who suffer a high rate of maternal mortality. To strengthen existing health facilities, female physicians, nurses and midwives have been trained in safe motherhood. WHO has also facilitated the training of 36 trainers of traditional birth attendants and has trained 404 such attendants from five regions of the country, who now serve in more than 400 villages. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), through the Afghanistan Rural Rehabilitation Programme, also supports human resource development in the health sector. WHO, in collaboration with national authorities, has functionally rehabilitated eight referral hospitals (provincial and district) and 30 mother and child facilities, which are serving about 600,000 women and children in all regions.

C. Water and sanitation

36. Lack of safe drinking water, poor sanitation and unhygienic practices contribute to high mortality rates. A Water and Sanitation Sector Group for Afghanistan (WSG) was formed in March 2000 under the leadership of UNICEF, with WHO, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and non-governmental organizations. The main objective is to raise awareness of good hygiene. In addition, a hand-pumped water supply and sanitation manual was developed in two local languages.

37. UNICEF has been helping communities to reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases, especially diarrhoea, through the provision of hand pumps and wells, sanitation facilities and hygiene education in rural and peri-urban areas. A sanitation and hygiene centre was established in Kandahar to serve as a demonstration and training centre.

38. Under the Poverty, Eradication and Community Empowerment (PEACE) initiative, rehabilitation projects in water supply, drainage, solid waste collection and the environment were carried out in six major cities and 23 rural districts. These included the construction or improvement of 295 shallow wells, the construction of 106 tube wells, the construction of village/district water supply systems, the construction of 11,180 pit latrines, and the protection of springs and karez wells, in rural Afghanistan. In urban centres, the PEACE initiative, through the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, has dug 85 wells, installed 180 hand pumps and cleared 85,000 cubic metres of solid waste. A project to improve access to water in the drought-stricken areas of Kandahar and Herat is at present under way.

D. Education

39. The position of the Taliban on girls' education has not changed, and girls are still not allowed to attend formal government schools. Women are not allowed to work in formal schools. Consequently, education has lost a vital resource and, further, boys no longer see women as role models in schools. The assistance community has therefore continued to work mostly through alternative and non-discriminatory channels of education in various regions of the country.

40. Owing to the ban on girls' education in the formal sector, UNICEF and a variety of non-governmental organizations support home-based schools, reaching an estimated 300,000 children. Through the local authorities, UNICEF continued work with over 150 rural community-based schools in the eastern region, providing educational materials, funding, teacher training, and management and technical support. In addition, various non-governmental organizations support formal primary schools, mostly in rural areas where the authorities allow girls access to schools.

41. In Badakhshan province, which is controlled by the Northern Alliance and where both girls and boys have access to schools, UNICEF and an international non-governmental organization provide education materials and teacher training. To complement this, WFP has begun food-for-education activities in chronic food-deficit areas, providing wheat to students and teachers to stem the disastrous dropout rates in the primary school years. Girls also receive edible oil. The project supports 49 schools in Badakhshan and about 21,122 students, 591 teachers and 88 support staff.

42. Recognizing that the construction or rehabilitation of educational facilities is not enough to address the education problems in Afghanistan, the PEACE initiative, in close cooperation with other partners, has undertaken a variety of educational activities for both genders. In rural Afghanistan, these included training of teacher trainers, provision of textbooks to 10,000 students, provision of non-formal education to 4,400 out-of-school children, and provision to 792 persons of vocational training in different trades, such as carpentry and masonry. In urban Afghanistan, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, through 50 community forums, provides education and vocational training to approximately 8,000 boys and girls. In 1999, the PEACE initiative also established 44 community primary schools for boys and girls in areas where no schools of any kind existed.

43. Educational messages on health, education, safe water, sanitation, hygiene and mine awareness are disseminated by radio through the Afghan Education Drama radio project of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). UNICEF is further assisting with the training and evaluation components of the BBC Radio Education for Afghan Children (REACH) project.

44. UNESCO continues to provide technical support for education in Afghanistan. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) undertook the Education for All 2000 assessment of basic education in Afghanistan. UNESCO has also produced a resource package of eight booklets on the culture of peace.

E. Mine action

45. Afghanistan remains severely affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance. The United Nations coordinated Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, with its workforce of some 4,800, undertakes various activities including mine-awareness education, technical training in mine action, general and technical information gathering, and survey and clearance of areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance.

46. The current known area contaminated by landmines in Afghanistan is 715 square kilometres, spread throughout the country. Of this, 333 square kilometres are assessed as being vitally important residential areas, commercial land, roads, irrigation systems and primary production land. In areas contaminated by landmines, there is an equally significant and serious problem posed by the existence of unexploded ordnance.

47. The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan plans, manages and integrates its activities with the other sectoral programmes implemented by other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. Nine Afghan non-governmental organizations and four international non-governmental organizations implement the Programme's activities. In addition, one Iranian non-governmental organization is also involved in mine-awareness training for the refugees returning from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Field-level planning, coordination and quality control are carried out by the United Nations regional mine action centres located at Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Jalalabad.

48. In 2000, the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan aims to clear up to 39.3 square kilometres of mined area and 63.5 square kilometres of former battle area, and to survey and mark 39.5 square kilometres of minefield and 63.5 square kilometres of

former battle area. It also plans to provide mine-awareness training to 1.5 million people and to provide the necessary staff training to maintain the Programme's standards and existing capacity.

F. Food and agriculture

49. While agricultural production remains the backbone of the economy, and the lifeline for the majority of Afghans, assistance activities remain constrained by the relative lack of funding provided by donors.

50. Despite this, FAO continued its activities to improve seed production and animal health and related activities in the sectors of animal production and support to horticultural development and pest management. The activities are a major component of the PEACE initiative and are part of the UNDP country programme.

51. The FAO Livestock Programme continued to support 255 district-based veterinary field units. Routine animal health activities continued in terms of vaccinations, deworming and other treatments as needed. Veterinary field units have developed a high degree of self-sustainability through a user-pays cost-recovery system.

52. To support animal production, efforts have focused on addressing the concerns raised by farmers at organized discussions in district shuras. Problems are solved with the assistance of FAO-supported local initiators, who address technical problems of both men and women farmers.

53. UNOPS, as part of the PEACE initiative, has continued to support the rehabilitation and construction of irrigation infrastructure as part of the overall effort to increase agricultural production. As a result of these interventions, 50,274 hectares of agricultural land have been brought into cultivation.

54. With assistance from FAO and WFP, 6,000 metric tonnes of wheat seed of improved high-yielding varieties have been produced in the current season. About one million fruit tree saplings have been planted in re-established orchards. Seventy district trainers are supervising 350 community trainers in providing advisory services to farmers.

55. Given the drought and the enormous cereal deficit, attention and funding may be drawn away from agricultural development efforts and directed towards emergency relief.

G. Rural and urban rehabilitation

56. The PEACE initiative organized by UNDP has facilitated the creation of community structures at the grass-roots level through two of its major components, the Afghanistan Rural Rehabilitation Programme, executed by UNOPS, and the Urban Rehabilitation Programme, executed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. Committees formed under these programmes raise awareness of the rehabilitation and development process, and subsequently assist in the formation and management of community organizations. During 1999, 5 female and 57 male rural development committees were established, and 22 community structures were created.

57. In six cities, community forums identify needs and develop subprojects, mainly in the areas of health, education, training, income-generation, community infrastructure, water and sanitation, roads, irrigation, energy and reintegration of refugees. The forums have also played an active role in a number of relief projects. These include pasta-making and road improvement in Mazar, involving 1,200 women and 1,500 men, and carpet weaving in Bamyan for 1,500 vulnerable women.

58. During 1999, the PEACE initiative also provided direct and indirect services to 25,000 disabled and other marginalized people. The programme includes orthopaedic appliances, physiotherapy, job training, microcredit, home-based training, integrated education, and facilitating the formation of disabled people's committees.

59. Under the PEACE initiative, basic local infrastructure has been constructed or rehabilitated with the involvement of community development organizations. This includes 14,845 cubic metres of road structures (bridges, culverts etc.) and 239 canal crossings which facilitate marketing of agricultural products, access to alternative income sources, access to health facilities, and communications.

60. A programme on environmental impact assessment training, the first such programme in Afghanistan, was conducted for about 100 national professionals. Moreover, several training and

awareness-raising initiatives are under way to promote environmental protection.

61. The income-generation and rural and urban credit programme of the PEACE initiative caters mainly to families living below the poverty line and other vulnerable groups, such as families headed by widows and disabled persons. Establishment of village revolving funds, a culturally and religiously accepted arrangement, has ensured sustainability of rural credit. In urban areas, each community forum has established its own scheme for income-generation projects, through the provision of small-scale seed capital, either as credit or equity. The capacity of communities has been built in managing microcredit and 7,455 rural women have also been provided with credit or income-generating activities.

H. Voluntary repatriation

62. Afghan refugees, one of the largest refugee caseloads over the past 20 years, currently number 1.2 million in Pakistan and 1.4 million in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The majority of Afghan refugees, having considered the military and political insecurity in Afghanistan, the lack of economic opportunities and basic services and the severe drought, as well as reports of serious violations of human rights, are not inclined to return.

63. With diminished international assistance to refugees in the region and worsening economic conditions, host Governments are equally reluctant to continue their past generous hospitality to Afghans. These Governments are becoming increasingly impatient to find a durable solution for these large refugee groups, raising concerns about certain practices that have failed to meet internationally recognized standards of protection.

64. Despite the enormous difficulties, at least 100,000 Afghans continue to be repatriated voluntarily each year. In the first six months of 2000, 64,000 Afghans voluntarily returned home. For these returnees and the millions of others who returned previously, reintegration assistance is important for sustainable repatriation.

65. UNHCR provides emergency reintegration assistance to meet the most basic needs of repatriating refugees for three months after their return. Under a programme concluded with the Islamic Republic of Iran in February 2000, 34,730 refugees received transport assistance from the border to provincial capitals of districts of return, minimizing the risk of internal displacement along sensitive border locations. UNHCR, together with WFP, also assisted 4,991 returnee families from Pakistan with the reconstruction of their homes. With regard to education, 5,900 children in over 300 community schools received materials such as stationery, textbooks, and supplementary reading materials. School buildings were renovated, teachers trained, and incentives paid to teaching staff. Over 200 shallow wells were improved, lessening the impact of the severe drought in southern and western Afghanistan. Income-generation projects for 1,500 women returnees were initiated throughout the country.

66. Assistance targeted not only returnees but also communities receiving a high number of returnees. Several United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations collaborated with UNHCR, in particular under the Greater Azro Initiative, by providing multisectoral assistance for the sustainable reintegration of returnees and the establishment of livelihoods.

67. To monitor the situation of returnees from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR has conducted extensive interviews with heads of returnee households, including women heads of families. The monitoring focuses primarily on respect for the rights of returnees, especially those provided for in the declarations of amnesty. These include non-discrimination on the grounds of religion, ethnicity and gender, access to and recovery of land and property, and exemption from conscription for at least one year after repatriation. In addition, the monitoring generates information on the access of returnees to potable water, health and education, as well as on the economic situation in the areas of return.

68. Based upon information collected through the monitoring exercise and in consultation with agencies working in various regions of Afghanistan, UNHCR has established a list of districts to which repatriation should not be facilitated either owing to insecurity (active hostilities) or the drought.

69. Although the current situation in Afghanistan does not allow UNHCR to promote voluntary repatriation, refugees who decide to return will continue to receive transport and repatriation grants.

UNHCR estimates that up to 200,000 Afghan refugees will return in 2000.

70. Diminishing international interest in the Afghan situation and reductions in donor support are, however, making it more difficult for UNHCR to ensure respect for the rights of Afghan refugees, returnees and asylum seekers. This includes guaranteeing the safe entry of new arrivals, providing immediate assistance and determining their status in coordination with host countries. Health, education and social services in the countries of asylum, as well as projects to support the successful reintegration of the returnees in Afghanistan, are also now at risk.

I. Drug control

71. In 1999, Afghanistan produced an estimated 4,600 metric tonnes of opium, 75 per cent of the world's illicit production. Most opium poppy growing districts are currently under the control of the Taliban. The abuse of opium, heroin, and pharmaceutical drugs continues to increase in the Afghan population, and some of the highest rates of heroin addiction in the world can now be found in the region. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme is undertaking a pilot project to address drug control and consumption in Afghanistan. Regional peace and stability are, however, the key to a sustained solution to drug control in Afghanistan.

72. Drug production and trafficking threaten regional stability and security. At the same time, the continuous war in Afghanistan and its effects on personal, national and regional levels of security provide an ideal environment for the cultivation and trafficking of drugs. With regard to drug trafficking, it is recognized that institutional support for law enforcement in Afghanistan is not practicable in the current political environment. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme encourages Afghan policies against illicit drugs through sustained dialogue with the Taliban, and with communities in which drugs are both used and produced in the Programme target areas. Owing to the Programme's continued advocacy for drug control, the leader of the Taliban movement and provincial governors issued decrees against opium poppy cultivation and subsequently destroyed opium poppy in the Programme's target areas. The Programme will continue to urge the Afghan factions to implement wider enforcement.

73. Pursuant to a decision by the "six plus two" group in February 2000 and a review of the issue by the Security Council in March 2000, a technical meeting on the Afghan narcotics issue and its wider regional implications was held at Vienna, from 8 to 10 May 2000. The participants ("six plus two" member States and major donor countries) discussed measures to enhance the effectiveness of drug control measures in Afghanistan and in the region. The United Nations common programming approach in Afghanistan was particularly emphasized as an appropriate framework to ensure that assistance is consistent with the goal of poppy elimination.

J. Human rights

74. The difficult human rights situation faced by Afghans is of major concern. A significant number of Afghans continue to die, and the vast majority are unable to enjoy their most fundamental human rights, owing to the accumulated effects of warfare, searing poverty, profound underdevelopment, and the policies and practices of the authorities.

75. Afghanistan has some of the most alarming socio-economic indicators in the world. Moreover, women and girls have few opportunities to participate in public life and in the decision-making that directly affects them. The drought that is now threatening the lives of a growing number of Afghans will exacerbate an already difficult human rights situation. Already there is evidence that the drought has resulted in famine deaths and is adversely affecting the rights to food, health and work.

76. Aid agencies can point to some achievements in addressing the problems of those who are least able to enjoy their human rights. Specific action has, for example, been taken to address the needs, including protection requirements, of the displaced and others who are affected by warfare. Various aid agencies are involved in assisting the disabled and in promoting the rights of women and children. A capacity-building programme to improve aid workers' understanding of human rights was launched earlier in 2000 after a survey that identified the issues of most concern to aid workers. This initiative will focus on the development of indigenous capabilities and will contribute to the development of tools to facilitate rights-based programming. Child-oriented agencies, including UNICEF and a number of non-governmental

organizations, have undertaken training on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Gender training workshops have been conducted for personnel of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

77. Both the gender and human rights advisors have developed mechanisms for consultation with colleagues from non-governmental organizations and the United Nations on policy and the mainstreaming of these respective agendas into programme activities. Human rights issues concerning health, education and women have been reviewed with the authorities as part of the Joint Consultative Committee process. At the programming level, in-depth meetings and questionnaires have identified and analysed the needs of the United Nations system in gender-related interventions. Pilot projects for women's employment have been designed. Steps have also been taken to develop an improved understanding of the human rights situation, commencing with the development of a profile on the right to health. Until, however, there is the commitment and capacity to tackle the underlying causes of poverty, including, in particular, the ongoing war, the human rights deficit faced by Afghans will continue to grow.

78. The immediate and direct effects of war are equal cause for concern. For the most part, non-combatants do not enjoy the rights and protection traditionally associated with civilian status. They have been bombed indiscriminately, deliberately targeted with violence and subjected to a wide range of human rights violations, including summary execution and arbitrary detention. Repeatedly, civilians have had to flee their homes, have seen their assets destroyed and have been denied access to humanitarian assistance.

79. There are indications that violations of human rights are carried out systematically. For example, sources allege that the Taliban in Samangan province massacred prisoners in May 2000, although confirmation of these allegations requires further investigation. During fighting in Darra Souf and Sangcharak districts, ongoing since January 2000, there have been repeated reports of arbitrary arrests and summary executions of civilians. The latter included the killing of village elders in and around Gosfandi. The climate of impunity that prevails in Afghanistan needs to be addressed; the absence of accountability is a significant factor in the persistence of human rights violations including the flagrant disregard of the right to life.

V. Assistance provided by Member States

80. Although the overall response to the consolidated appeal for 1999 was an improvement on previous years, it was still disappointing. A little over 60 per cent of the priority programmes identified in the appeal were not funded. Consequently, many opportunities to improve lives and livelihoods in Afghanistan have been missed.

81. This point has been considered by the members of the Afghan Support Group of donor countries, and there are positive signs from the response to the appeal for 2000 that additional resources will be available for humanitarian action in Afghanistan. Forty-three per cent of the total funding needs for 2000 have been covered as at July 2000, as against 22 per cent at the same point in 1999. Moreover, Member States are making their contributions to the appeal earlier, enabling timelier implementation of programmes and projects. As noted above, however, the drought is compounding humanitarian needs and increasing the requirement for international support. Additional information on funding, including contributions by specific donors, can be found on the web site <*www.reliefweb.com*>.

VI. Concluding observations

82. The past 12 months have brought no respite to Afghans, and the prospects for the next 12 months equally are bleak. There is no peace in sight. As both sides have reinforced their military capability with supplies from outside Afghanistan, an upsurge in military activity seems inevitable. Socio-economic conditions are deteriorating to a point that is difficult to imagine. With the exception of limited trade-related activity, most Afghans eke out an existence at subsistence levels or lower. In the cities, there is little or no employment. In drought-affected rural areas close to the front lines, some families are barely surviving on famine foods such as grasses, roots and alfalfa. Deaths from famine have been reported. The safety net provided by the international community's humanitarian assistance, while welcome, is threadbare; too many vulnerable Afghans fall through the net.

83. The combination of war, drought and displacement is likely to take a terrible toll in the

coming months. Afghans are renowned for their resilience but there are now signs that 22 years of war and the attendant development and human rights deficits are driving out the last vestiges of hope. The brain drain and the collapse of the education system will have a devastating effect on future generations and on development prospects.

84. Moreover, most Afghans feel very strongly that the international community has forgotten them, and failed them. Apart from much-needed life-saving humanitarian assistance which simply prevents Afghanistan from becoming an even greater disaster, there are few instances of response to the huge rehabilitation and reconstruction needs, even in those areas of the country that are relatively stable.

85. The humanitarian imperative to assist Afghans remains acute and indeed may become more so in the coming months. It is hoped that with support from Member States, the United Nations will increase its presence in the country and ensure that vital humanitarian assistance can continue.

86. The effects of the drought are expected to become more severe as the present year progresses. As the effects of the drought and the expected seasonal clashes accumulate, significant population movements cannot be ruled out, including across international borders. This could lead to an additional dimension of risk in a fragile and volatile region. On the positive side, the response of the donor community to the appeal launched for the drought has so far been encouraging. Depending on whether the drought eases or deepens in the coming months, the United Nations may need to appeal again to the international community.

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Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session: Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

Work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters held its thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth sessions in New York from 31 January to 2 February 2000 and in Geneva from 5 to 7 July 2000, respectively.

At its first session, the Board stressed that there was an urgent need to combat complacency in the face of new and alarming dangers to international security such as an enhanced emphasis on nuclear weapons in military doctrines, missile proliferation and the possible deployment of national missile defence systems. With a view to combating that complacency in the long term, the Board recommended that a study be commissioned on disarmament and non-proliferation education and training and developed a draft mandate for the study.

The Board discussed the prospects for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (April/May 2000) and the significance of the adoption of the Conference's Final Document (NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I-IV)). In examining the issue of small arms proliferation in the light of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Board clarified several goals and objectives of the meeting. At its July meeting, the Board began consideration of the question of the revolution in military affairs (RMA) and will continue such consideration at future meetings. A summary of the Board's discussions is included

* A/55/150 and Corr.1 and 2.

** The present report covers the results of two sessions of the Advisory Board, 31 January-2 February and 5-7 July 2000.

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in the present report. In response to General Assembly resolution 54/54 K, the Board forwarded to the Secretary-General "inputs ... on information with regard to specific measures that could significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war", suggesting four measures on which emphasis should be placed to reduce nuclear danger. A summary of that discussion is contained in a separate report to the Assembly (A/55/324). In its capacity as Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Board approved for submission to the Assembly the report of the Director of the Institute on its activities from July 1999 to July 2000 and the programme of work and budget for 2001 (see A/55/267).

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters* held its thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth sessions in New York from 31 January to 2 February 2000 and in Geneva from 5 to 7 July 2000, respectively. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/183 O of 20 December 1983. The report of the Board on its work as Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) has been presented in a separate document (A/55/267). The "inputs" of the Board in response to the request made in Assembly resolution 54/54 K of 1 December 1999 entitled "General and complete disarmament: reducing nuclear danger" are contained in a separate report of the Secretary-General (A/55/324).

2. Miguel Marín Bosch, Consul General of Mexico in Barcelona, chaired the two sessions of the Board in 2000.

3. Below are some of the salient points of the Board's deliberations during the two sessions and the specific recommendations it conveyed to the Secretary-General.

A. Nuclear issues

4. The overarching theme of the thirty-fourth session of the Board was the need to combat governmental and public complacency, bordering on apathy, with respect to the increasingly alarming threats to international security. One threat was in the form of a new arms race, whose latest manifestation was the possibility of a race in offensive ballistic missiles. The proliferation of ballistic missile defence systems would unbalance the strategic stability of the last 50 years based on nuclear deterrence. Though perverse, the capability of mutual assured destruction between the major nuclear-weapon States, and the ability, possessed by the other nuclear-weapon States, to wreak a level of destruction on an opponent was the basis of a doctrine aimed at providing the world with a degree of assurance that such weapons of mass destruction would never be used. Building down the nuclear threat while maintaining strategic stability should be the order of the day. Certainly expanding that threat in the name of security made little sense. The possible dismantling of the current strategic security structure in favour of a system whereby each State sought its own invulnerability would lead, according to one member, to "nuclear anarchy". Another side of this issue is the growing threat of missile proliferation, which is both cause and effect of the current crisis.

5. Among other catalysts were the preparations being made by the United States of America for a national missile defence (NMD) system and its possible effect on the bilateral Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty).[1] It was noted that NMD was, among other things, a response to missile proliferation development. There was widespread agreement that the effects of breaching the ABM Treaty would reverberate beyond the boundaries of the two parties to the agreement. The reaction of the Russian Federation to that possibility has been swift. Though several voices on the Board believed that changes in the terms of the ABM Treaty could be negotiated between its two parties and strategic security upheld, other members expressed concern about the reaction of other States to the deployment of an NMD system. They feared that other States would use the development of an NMD system by the major nuclear-weapon State as justification to create indigenous NMD systems, including weapons of mass destruction, for their own regional or subregional security. It would appear, stated one member, that in contrast to the cold war era when the political situation shaped the weapon, it was now the weapon that was shaping the political situation.

6. The Board generally regretted that the nuclear doctrines promulgated by the nuclear-weapon States still placed great emphasis on the possible use of nuclear weapons. This was the case at a time when those States should be moving away from such a possibility. The arguments put forward in the United States Senate in favour of rejection of the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in October 1999 were a disturbing reassertion of the continuation of reliance on the possible use of nuclear weapons. The new draft military doctrine of the Russian Federation, reaffirming the utility of nuclear weapons to guarantee security, was also a reminder of the maintenance of reliance on nuclear weapons.

7. This new security situation was the cause and backdrop of the already stagnant multilateral disarmament agenda, in the Conference on

* Members of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters are listed in the annex to the present report.

Disarmament and in the sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) of the last three years. It was evident that the lack of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty and on negative security assurances was not due to the structure of the Conference on Disarmament, but rather to a security and political climate hostile to arms control. The setbacks that the NPT had faced since the 1995 indefinite extension decision were manifold. Despite the discussions on how to begin negotiations for Strategic Arms Reduction (START) III, the lack of formal negotiations between the two major nuclear-weapon Powers on further reductions in strategic nuclear weapons did not augur well for sustaining the basic bargain of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. The deployment of nuclear weapons in South Asia would also constitute a severe challenge to the Treaty's fundamental purpose. The rejection of the CTBT by the United States Senate had been a serious blow to the Treaty's credibility and the goals set by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

8. The views in the Board on how or if the NPT would survive these setbacks varied, but at the winter session there was generally little optimism that the 2000 NPT Review Conference would lead to positive results. Instead, members stressed the need to look beyond success or failure of the Conference to the greater need of preserving the nuclear non-proliferation regime and promoting nuclear disarmament in other ways.

9. To that end, the Board urged the Secretary-General to use the moral authority invested in his high office to make appeals to all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to overcome their differences and to pursue their fundamental article VI commitment to the eventual elimination of all such weapons. They suggested that those appeals be made not only to disarmament forums, but also to major conferences in other fields. They should also be aimed at world public opinion, for it was essential, according to most members, that people appreciate the risks that were being faced. It was proposed that the focus of a disarmament education campaign (discussed below) should be nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

10. At the second session of the Board in July, members addressed the results of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and opinions varied. For some members from States parties to the Treaty, the Final Document (NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I-IV)) contained new commitments to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and represented, if not the ideal outcome, then one that was achievable. They were convinced that the basic provisions of the Treaty had emerged strengthened from the 2000 NPT Review Conference, especially in the commitments made under the review of article VI. What was needed now was a consolidation of those gains.

11. For some members from States parties, the results were skewed by the fact that the discussions at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the agreements reached had not taken account of the heightened debate over the strategic consequences of possible deployment of national missile defences.

12. Members from non-States parties made clear their belief that the results were divorced from the reality of the current political situation, particularly in the nuclear field, and thus irrelevant. The lack of debate in the 2000 NPT Review Conference on the crucial issue of national missile defence plans served only to increase for them that sense of unreality.

13. All members, however, recommended that the Secretary-General continue to focus on the issue of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and on promoting education about the dangers of nuclear war. Different views were expressed on the Secretary-General's proposal for consideration by the Millennium Summit of an international conference to help identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, aimed at attracting the attention of the world community to those urgent needs.

B. General Assembly resolution 54/54 K entitled "General and complete disarmament: reducing nuclear danger"

14. The Board welcomed the opportunity offered by the request made to the Secretary-General in General Assembly resolution 54/54 K to seek inputs on "information with regard to specific measures that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war". An outline of the measures it had adduced for reducing

nuclear danger, along with papers prepared by three Board members, Harald Müller, Guillermo González and Arundhati Ghose, was being submitted to the Assembly in a separate report of the Secretary-General (A/55/324). The Board lacked the time to consider those measures in depth and will continue discussing them at future sessions.

C. Small arms in the light of the convening of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

15. The discussions in the Board on the complex issue of the proliferation of small arms pointed to at least a triple-track approach to the 2001 Conference. The first track could be labelled global consciousness-raising. There is a need to highlight at the international level the highly public and humanitarian aspects of the issue. It is global in that it involves a symbiosis between the developed and the developing world, between suppliers and recipients, and between countries at peace and those in conflict. The non-governmental community and other members of civil society, including private security and banking companies, will play an important part in this effort.

16. The second track would involve the creation of international norms, such as criteria governing the transfer and receipt of small arms. It will be no easy task, however, to distinguish between licit and illicit trade in small arms, bearing in mind the legitimate Charter of the United Nations-given right of self-defence. Given the disparity among and specificity of regions, some members believed that such norms were better elaborated at the regional or even subregional levels.

17. The third track, and by far the most important, involves the efforts, initiatives and activities of regions and subregions on the issue. Those efforts should be undertaken not only during times of conflict or after conflict, but also in a preventive mode. Moreover, sustained efforts were necessary, as the effects of small arms proliferation could last a long time after a conflict ended. The international community will play a pivotal role in supporting regions in those efforts both politically and financially.

D. Revolution in military affairs and its effect on disarmament and arms limitation

18. At its thirty-fifth session, the Board began an examination of the question of the revolution in military affairs (RMA) on the basis of a paper prepared by a Board member, Jean-Marie Guéhenno. The Board recognized that the discussion held was useful, if preliminary. It agreed to study this matter further and to explore in more detail the implications of RMA in a number of areas, especially with regard to future disarmament measures.

E. Education for disarmament

19. In 1978, the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly[2] (the first special session devoted to disarmament) called for a disarmament education campaign. In 1980, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held a World Congress on Disarmament Education, which elaborated an ambitious global programme of action for education in the field. However, those were different days, when the threat of nuclear annihilation was keenly felt and the desire for rational control over the nuclear-arms race was great. The Board emphasized the fact that the complacency on nuclear issues today, as discussed above, was the underlying reason for the lack of interest at all levels of education in disarmament issues. The Board extended the scope of the discussion of disarmament education to include education for non-proliferation. Indeed, there are many research institutes around the world that devote themselves to peace studies and conflict resolution or prevention. It is striking, however, that only two institutes of higher learning in the world offer a graduate concentration in non-proliferation.

20. The Board recommended that the Secretary-General highlight the need for disarmament and non-proliferation education at all levels of education, from primary through secondary to higher education, at the Millennium Summit this year. Some members stressed that there was a gaping need for such education among parliamentarians, industrial and business circles, the media and the general public.

21. To the January-February meeting, during the traditional segment with the non-governmental organization community, the Board invited two members of the academic community distinguished in the field of disarmament education: Betty A. Reardon of Teachers College — Columbia University, New York, who stressed the centrality of disarmament education to peace education and the centrality of education to disarmament; and Eudora Pettigrew, Chairman of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) and the United Nations-sponsored Commission on Disarmament Education, Conflict Resolution and Peace, who described the challenges of setting up disarmament-related programmes at university levels of education.

22. At the summer session, the President of the NGO Committee on Disarmament (Geneva), David Atwood, its Secretary-General, Colin Archer, and Cate Buchanan of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, presented their joint views in a comprehensive paper to the Board on the subject of disarmament and non-proliferation education. They supported the proposal for a United Nations study on the issue and expressed their readiness to cooperate closely in the venture. The non-governmental organizations and civil society have a long history of education and training in the field and a wealth of relevant experience and expertise that ought to be tapped for such a study.

23. Many ideas arose from the discussion on ways to engage educators in the developed and developing world on disarmament and non-proliferation education. Chief among those ideas was one concerning the use of modern electronic communications methods, especially the Internet. This is an educational tool of vast potential that the Secretary-General and the United Nations ought to exploit thoroughly.

24. In order to refine the concept of disarmament and non-proliferation education in today's world and to give a focus for ideas, it was proposed that the United Nations undertake a study of the issue. At its summer session, the Board developed a draft mandate for such a study for the consideration of the Secretary-General.

II. Board of Trustees of UNIDIR

25. At the winter session, the Director of UNIDIR, Patricia Lewis, gave the Board of Trustees of the Institute an interim update of the Institute's programme of work and adjusted budget estimates for the year 2000.[3]

26. The Director informed the Board of Trustees of plans to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Institute during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The opportunity of the commemoration will be seized to seek greater support from the Assembly for strengthening the budget of the Institute.

27. At its summer session, pursuant to article III, paragraph 2 (b), of the Statute of the Institute, the Board approved, for submission to the General Assembly, the programme of work and budget of the Institute for 2001 (see note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director of UNIDIR — A/55/267).

III. Future work

28. The Board proposed to include the following items in its future work:

(a) Continuation of the discussion of specific measures that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/54 K;

(b) Continuation of the discussion on the revolution in military affairs (RMA) and its effect on disarmament and arms limitation;

(c) Review of the third mandated function of the Board, namely, "to advise the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme".

29. Other topics that could be considered are:

(a) Functioning of the non-proliferation regimes and their impact on disarmament in general;

(b) A theme that could emerge from the Millennium Summit;

(c) Conventional disarmament;

(d) A series of papers that examine nuclear-weapon-free zones as a non-proliferation and disarmament approach;

(e) Cultures of violence;

(f) Outer space issues, including a possible arms race in outer space;

(g) Contribution to and results of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;

(h) The threat of missile proliferation and the impact of missile defences.

Notes

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 944, No. 13446.

[2] General Assembly resolution S-10/2.

[3] The second mandated function of the Advisory Board is to serve as the Board of Trustees of UNIDIR.

Annex

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Ex officio member

Dr. Patricia **Lewis**[ab]
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[a] Participated in the thirty-fourth session of the Advisory Board.
[b] Participated in the thirty-fifth session of the Advisory Board.